AKWESASNE NOTES

Vol. 13, No. 4

Subscription: $8/year

News-stand price: $1.50

054 8-81.5 6
Ray Shackelton
RD 1 Box 139-A
Bristol, VT
05443

Late Autumn, 1981

A JOURNAL FOR NATIVE AND NATURAL PEOPLES

IN THIS ISSUE:

- COLONIALISM & REVOLUTION: Nicaragua and the Miskito Nation – An Interview with Armstrong Wiggins.....4
- GENEVA 1981 – Steps Toward Recognition 16
- UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT OF INDIAN RIGHTS.....21
- INDIAN CLAIMS COMMISSION CASES THREATEN INDIAN LAND RIGHTS...23
- MESSAGE TO THE INDIANS IN GUATEMALA.....24
- BIG MOUNTAIN: The Women Who Fight.....25

NEW ERA LOOMS IN ECONOMIC RELATIONS.....28

- WE MUST EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN.....30
- MOHAWK NATION: A Resolution of Issues.....32
- ELDERS' CIRCLE.....34

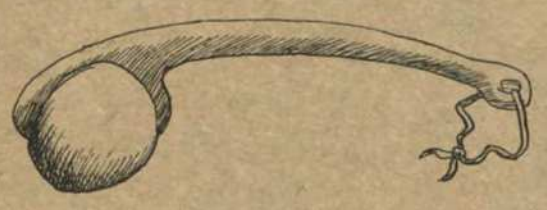
HOW IT IS WITH US

Our work grows ever more promising, and it seems, ever more urgent. The nature of the Native peoples' movement is changing, growing, maturing, becoming more sophisticated. Our communications work within that movement, we hope, reflects these changes. The basic truths by which we operate haven't changed, but the people, we can feel, have forged ahead in many places in the Hemisphere.

It is becoming clearer and clearer that our peoples are destined to be part of a new consciousness, one which demands a global perspective manifested in a locally focused activism. In functioning, in learning, in growing, we are developing a consciousness of our movement as one with such a global perspective. We are consciously becoming true members of a "global village" in which Native people will participate in the struggle for human survival today and in the future for generations to come. To be sure, that struggle is manifested in our actions to preserve the quality of our lives in the places where we live, but the potential and reality of growth as members of the world community is a natural and necessary trend, and one which we welcome.

This autumn, a representative of NOTES travelled through Switzerland, Germany, France, Holland, Luxumbourg, Belgium and England. She reports that on her travel, the strongest response came when she spoke of the interests of the seventh generation in the future. The idea that we are responsible for the well-being of the future generations is new to peoples who are quickly discovering that that future is threatened by industrial pollution, nuclear arms build up, and the nuclear industry.

The future generations – community based schools, the preservation of the land base, language, survival skills, spirituality, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, sovereignty – the people preparing, building. These are the things which define our work. And our work at NOTES is growing because the people are preparing. There is much sacrifice, much hope, many disappointments, but the work endures, survives, and grows. Despite all the dangers, setbacks, difficulties, problems, we see much positive growth, and it strengthens our spirits. That is how it is with us.



Cover artwork from AKWESASNE NOTES 1982 Calendar. Artist Kahonhes.

AKWESASNE NOTES

ISSN 0002 3949

AKWESASNE NOTES is published five times annually: March, May, July, September, and December.

Editorial and circulation offices are maintained on the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, near Hogansburg, New York, and at locations near Rooseveltown, New York, and Malone, New York.

2ND CLASS POSTAGE Paid at Rooseveltown, N.Y. 13683 and at Additional Mailing Office, USPS 956640.

USPS 956-640

Postmaster: send form 3579 and all correspondence to:

AKWESASNE NOTES
Mohawk Nation
via Rooseveltown, N.Y. 13683
(518) 358-9531

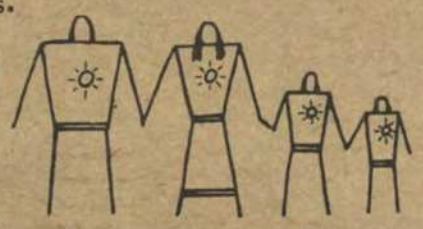
Recipient: Grant from the World Council of Churches Special Fund to Combat Racism (1975), Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Foundation Journalish Award Special Citation (1973), Marie Potts Award of the American Indian Press Association (1972). Member: Alternative Press Syndicate.

This issue printed by M.R.S. Printing, Gouverneur, New York.

AKWESASNE NOTES is the official publication of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne.

NEEDED FOR NOTES:

Letter-size file folders, winter boots & shoes, working typewriter, desks, index cards, blue pencils, film strip projector, scissors, film, 36 mm camera, hearing-aid batteries.



AKWESASNE NOTES PEOPLE:

Carol, Charlene, Saka, Ray, Rasennes, Beverly, Katsi, Jose, Tsiorasa, Pat, Hawi, Forrest, Angie, Chaske, Russ, John, Taronwe, Mary, and Rob, Martina, Atirontaks.

A NEW WAY TO HELP NOTES

Your contributions to AKWESASNE NOTES can now be tax-deductible. The Youth Project of Washington, D.C., a public foundation under 501-C-3 of the Internal Revenue Code has agreed to take NOTES under its wing as a research and educational project.

If you would like to support these efforts and receive the benefit of a tax-deductible contribution your check should be made out to Akwesasne Notes/The Youth Project, and sent to us here at NOTES.

Please note that subscription fees are not tax deductible.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS--IMPORTANT!!!

When notifying us of a cancellation or a change of address PLEASE send in your address label from the latest NOTES issue recieved. It makes the work of keeping our mailing list up to date a lot more manageable.

1982 CALENDAR

HAUDENOSAUNEE (IROQUOIS) CREATION STORY $6.00

The cover of our 1982 calendar features a full color painting by KAHIONHES which illustrates the beginning of the CREATION STORY as sky woman descends into the darkness of the lower world (earth).

The fine art drawings for the 12 months follow a dramatic sequence of events up to the creation of human beings. J.N.B. Hewitts version is printed not as fact or as the final word in Iroquoian Cosmology, but as an allegorical collage of Iroquoian oral history recorded by Hewitt around the turn of the century.

Includes Native poetry which follows the seasons by: Kahionhes, Rokwaho, Karoniatakie, Peter Blue Cloud, Joseph Bruchac and Maurice Kenny. "Herein you shall discover poems of truth, and poetry for the sake of beauty in the celebration of mystery. Life is an evolving celebration of purification, and if it is not, it should be

E.R.I.N.

AKWESASNE NOTES editors have established an Emergency Response International Network (E.R.I.N.) to provide quick response to emergency situations threatening native peoples from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic.

People working on E.R.I.N. are involved in this work on the basis of consciousness and trust. The overwhelming purpose of the activities is to confront potentially violent situations and to do so in a way that will safeguard the safety of communities under the threat of military or environmental destruction.

The Network is activated by NOTES staff, in conference with representatives of the affected community -- and always focuses pressure on the individuals, government agencies or corporations trying to oppress or control the situation.

Readers willing to participate in the network can write to: E.R.I.N., Akwesasne Notes/Mohawk Nation,/via Rooseveltown, NY 13683, (or phone 518 - 358-9531

E.R.I.N. is organized by regions in North America and Europe.

Contributions are tax deductible.

Please make sure to include your area code and phone number!!!

E.R.I.N. T-SHIRTS

ON SALE

In order to raise money for E.R.I.N., we are selling T-shirts of several designs and colors. One of the designs is depicted here. The T-sirts are made of cotton, in blue, white, or red, and come in the three standard sizes. T-shirts are $6.00. For further information or to order (prepaid), Write to: WINDED-T, c/o Bob Beatty, P.O. Box 94, Lebanon, New Jersey 08833.

RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION NOW!

INSIDE UNITED STATES

Express $14.00 (Mailed 1st class immediately after paper is published)

Regular $8.00 (Mailed 2nd class)

OUTSIDE OF UNITED STATES

Air Mail $30.00 Mailed from our office immediately after paper is published.

Surface $20.00 Mailed 1st class from our office

Regular $15.00 Mailed 2nd class

AKWESASNE NOTES
Mohawk Nation
Rooseveltown, New York 13683

I WOULD LIKE TO (RE) SUBSCRIBE TO AKWESASNE NOTES

Name:

Address:

State and Zip Code:

Native Nation:

Organization (if any):

ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND $8.00

PLEASE ATTACH MAILING LABEL IF RESUBSCRIBING

COLONIALISM and REVOLUTION

NICARAGUAN SANDINISM AND THE LIBERATION OF THE MISKITO, SUMU AND RAMA PEOPLES

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARMSTRONG WIGGINS

(Editor's Note: The lowland region of eastern Nicaragua, known as the Atlantic Coast, presents a special dilemma for the two year old Sandinista Revolution. Issues of indigenous autonomy, regional economic development and national defense are inextricably mixed there. The region comprises slightly more than half the Nicaraguan national territory, but contains only 10% of the total population. The Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast is populated by a majority of Indians: 150,000 Miskito, 15,000 Sumu and some 800 Rama. There is one settlement of Caribs and more than 30,000 Creoles, black population, also in the region. Finally at least 50,000 Spanish-speaking people (called "Spaniards" in Creole English and ladinos in Spanish) have come from the Pacific side, the great majority in the massive migrations of the last 30 years.

The Atlantic Coast Indian country, called "La Moskitia" by the people there, was only peripherally affected during the liberation warfare of the 1970s.

In the minds of its indigenous inhabitants La Moskitia is a very distinct region -- a colonizd but yet unconquered aboriginal territory -- economically exploited, yet after 400 years of Western domination, still impenetrable.

During the struggle against the Zomoza dictatorship, the Miskito and Sumu developed a cohesive organizing network -- called Alpromiso -- with which to combat land dispossession schemes and the planned elimination of their Native languages by the government.

It can be said that their fight against the Zomoza regime (and prior Nicaraguan national governments) was parallel to rather than within the Sandinista movement. The Misito and Sumu were later joined by the Rama People, and, as individuals, many Indian activists joined the Sandinista Movement in military and political combat against the dictator.

After the triumph of the Nicaraguan people's revolution, the Misito, Sumu and Rama founded a common organization: MISURASATA. Their hope, at the time, was to work with the new revolutionary government to achieve their long-standing goals of: securing their land base; protecting the natural resources in their ancestral territories; perpetuating their own indigenous languages, traditions and economic subsistance modes, and; guaranteeing and developing their ability to choose their own organization and leadership.

Almost immediately, deep problems arose between Sandinista representatives and the MISURASATA leadership.

The whole of Nicaragua is currently in the midst of a process of political polarization: on one hand is the (Sandinista National Liberation Front) FSLN-led revolutionary government, and on the other the counter-revolution taking form both inside and outside the country. Between the two polarized forces, MISURASATA is now practically disappearing. While counter-revolutionaries try to gain the Miskito Indians for their fight, the Sandinista government insists on directly controlling the region itself, and therefore has taken the decision to no longer promote MISURASATA. Thus the people of the Atlantic Coast are being alienated by a process which leaves no room for special regional development not directly linked to either Sandinista or counter-revolutionary strategy.

The Indian peoples, as usual, find themselves in the middle, with their special positions as aboriginal inhabitants totally denied by both the left and the right -- and their future in question.

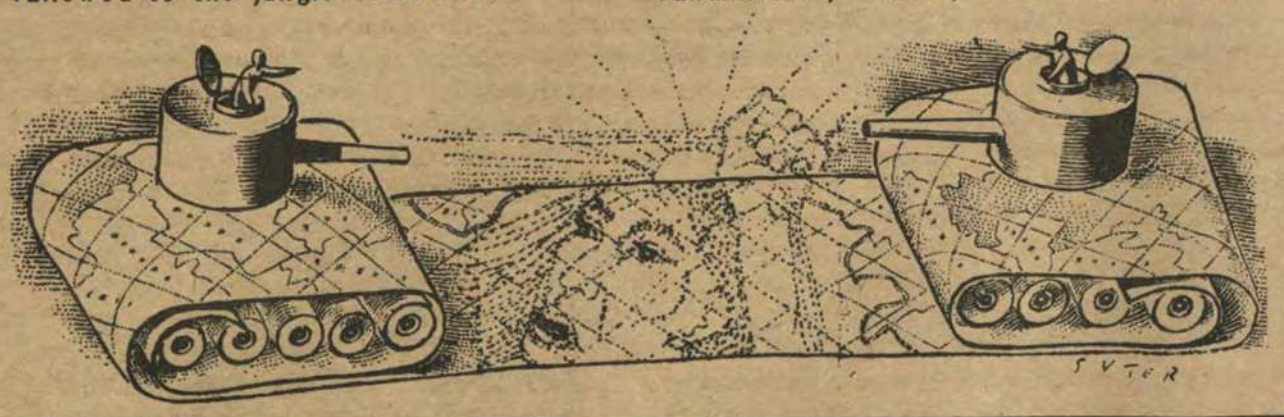
The Atlantic Coast's Indians peoples live in stable communities requiring sizeable amounts of land for hunting, fishing and farming. Employing a traditional method of slash-and-burn agriculture, they cear small plots of the tropical rain forest which are planted for one to three years, before they are fallowed to the jungle afterwards.

The advancing migration of Spanish-speaking peasants into the Atlantic region is widely regarded by the Indians as a foreign conquest of their land. Because of the consolidation in western Nicaragua of large landholdings suitable for the capitalist production of coffee, sugar, and beef, campesinos were forced off their land in the 1950's and obliged to migrate to the officially designated "free" lands on the Atlantic. To the south of Bluefields the migrants have already reached the coast, surrounding the Rama, who now inhabit only a small fraction of their former territory.

The basic economic strategy of the Somoza dictatorship was the whole-sale selling-out of natural resources to the United States. Gold, lumber, bananas, shrimps and lobsters were exported by foreign companies allied with the Somoza family. Given the lack of economic integration with the rest of Nicaragua and the direct exploitation of the Atlantic coast by U.S. companies, Somoza did not have to apply the same degree of political repression as on the Pacific side.

The struggle of the Sandinista resistance movement never took hold on the Atlantic side. In general, the Indians and Creoles identified neither with the revolutionary struggle nor with the Somoza regime, but rather as inhabitants of the distinctive territory of "the Coast".

History has taught the Indians to think of the "Spaniards" before all else as invaders and colonizers. A pre-condition for the Indian peoples acceptance of the Revolutionary process is the termination of the internal colonization inherited from Somoza. MISURASATA, founded as "the alliance of the Indians with the Sandinistas", initially assumed that only



Armstrong Wiggins, seated second from left, was the Misito delegate to the 1977 Geneva NGO conference. His observations of the Indian situation in Nicaragua begin on the following page.

with the integral participation of [illegible]ians and their mass movement in [illegible] revolutionary process, would they achieve self-determination within Nicaragua. But, from the start, official Sandinista policy was for "total integration of the Atlantic Coast" in the words of Comander Daniel Ortega, a position that grew increasingly rigid and culminated in an open conflict between the Nicaraguan national government and the Indian people.

The struggle of the indigenous peoples against foreign systems of economic oppression, and for their ethnic survival, dates from 1502, with the first incursion of the Spanish Conquistadores. The Atlantic Coastal region, however, was never conquered because of the impassability of the tropical rainforest. Not until 1687 was the area finally penetrated by a foreign power. In that year the British treated for and set up a colony called "Miskitia-Kingdom" - in which the British used Black and non-Miskito Indian slave labor for plantation and crop production. Moravian Protestant missionaries came to the Coast in 1847 and, in just a few decades, converted most of the Indian population to christianity. In 1894 Nicaraguan national forces occupied the Coast. Native resistance at that time culiminated in a treaty - The Harrison-Altamirano Treaty, which set the precedent (if not the practice) for obtaining legal title to the Indian community lands. The history since that time has been a struggle to contain encroachment by white settlers and to maintain the Indian culture. However the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie were never able to exploit the area themselves and through the 20th Century the Atlantic coast was left to North American companies in their quest for bananas, rubber, lumber and gold.

"We people are only guests in the bush", the Miskito say, and point out that at issue is a basic difference between the traditional Indian concept of land ownership and that advanced by the Sandinistas who had defined all untitled land to be state territory. Negotiations between MISURASATA and the government seemed to point out a solution: the Indian organization was to map its claimed [illegible]s and elaborate a legal study in defense of the [illegible]aim. But only a few days before it was to be delivered, the 28th of February, 1981, [illegible] MISURASATA leaders and a number of Mis[illegible] literacy teachers were jailed and accused [illegible] separatism. Two weeks later, the charges w[illegible] dropped and the Indians freed. The [illegible]sis, however, provoked some 3,000 Miskito m[illegible] to take refuge across the border in Honduras where a Miskito population of approximately 100,000 also resides. Since then the Sandinist Army has kept all the important Miskito communities under direct military vigilance. Passive resistance towards government activities has been the reaction.

In fact, MISURASATA's claims do not appear to be for independance from Nicaragua, but to decolonize the Coast: to limit new migration, to participate in local and regional government, to gain more representation on the State Council, and to change some government officials and military personnel whom they regard as hostile to the Indians. The Indians include the Spanish-speaking minority as permanent inhabitants of the Coast.

From their perspective, the Sandinistas consider that the Indians have a 400 year history of struggle against the Spanish, and Sandinista leaders fear the Miskito could ally themselves with a Honduras-based counter-revolutionary invasion. There are currently some 6,000 former Somozista soldiers preparing themselves and waiting for a green light from Washington to wage the counter-revolution. Furthermore, there are already continuous assaults coming out of Honduras, in the north of the Pacific area. While the number of those Miskito who have so far affiliated with the counter-revolutionaries in their training camps in Honduras is small, the FSLN knows that it is easy for the counter-revolution to make promises to the Coastal people. Steadman Fagoth, one of the leaders of the Miskito has been in Honduras since May, 1981, and appears converted to activism on behalf of the armed counter-revolution in that country. Fagoth exerts considerable influence on a segment of the Miskito population remaining in Nicaragua, particularly through his broadcasts on the radio station "15th of September", the voice of the counter-revolutionary forces, and also the most heard station on the Atlantic Coast.

Growing economic pressure on Nicaragua and special precautions against an awaited attack originating out of Honduras, minimize for the present the chances for respectfull understanding between the Sandinists and the Indians.

This lack of resolution is extremely unfortunate for, with every passing day the danger of open warfare (or more likely military repression) intensifies.

It is unfortunate, too, that on the international level this very complex situation is being described as solely a struggle between the left and the right -- and thus the voices of authentic Indian concerns are drowned out. A great deal of confusion on this subject was generated at the NGO Conference on Indigenous people held in Geneva, Switzerland this past September. There, representatives of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), a north american Indian organization, attempted to pressure through a pro-Sandinista position and, quite irresponsibly, labeled the one true Miskito representative at the conference, Hazel Lau, -a "CIA agent" - for her adamant disagreement.

The resolution was blocked by other Indian [illegible]gates. However, the con[illegible]fusions and misunderstandings have remained, as has suspicion that the IITC has fallen prey to t[illegible] manipulation of the East-West conflict.

The following is an intervie[illegible] with Armstrong Wiggins, a Miskito Indian f[illegible] Nicaragua and a founder of both ALPROMISO and MISURASATA. Wiggins was one of the Indians arrested by the Nicaraguan Security forces in February of 1981, when the open conflict erupted. He now resides in Washington, DC., where he works for the Indian Law Resource Center.

As Wiggins points out in the interview, the situation of the Miskiot, Sumu and Rama Nations in Nicaragua is one of supreme interest to all Native Peoples in North, Central and South America -- and especially to the Mayas of Guatemala. It is the first instance of a left-revolutionary government having to come to terms with American Indian peoples. The positions and directions followed there are likely to set the tone in this regard for decades to come.

The interview with Wiggins was conducted by Ismaelillo, a Notes Associate Editor. We wish to thank Michael Rediske, Robin Schneider and Ted MacDonald for much of the above information.)

"THE INDIAN LIFE IS A HARD ONE. BUT IT IS OURS. AS INDIANS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR... OUR CULTURE MUST SURVIVE, SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO EXIST... "

-- WIGGINS

AKWESASNE NOTES: It is pretty well known, by now, internationally, that there have been conflicts and even some fighting in Nicaragua between Indians--specifically the Miskito People--and the Sandinista authorities. We would like to speak with you about the nature of that conflict...

ARMSTRONG WIGGINS: Yes, alright. But I must insist that there is much history to this situation--so it is complex and there is much to explain.

AN: We understand that, and we are looking for the fullest possible discussi about it.

Wiggins: Good, beca[illegible] we have to say that the curr[illegible] problem between Misurasata [illegible] Indian organization – and the Sa[illegible]ista government has a long hist[illegible]. That history is the history of our [illegible]dian people in the Nicaraugua region. Because the attempts to destroy us go back a long way, and you know that the western people – of whatever race or nationality – have never listened to our explanations of the way we see life, what we want for ourselves, our lands, and our future.

So this is a long history and there have been many injustices and this goes back many generations. Now, when I am speaking of Miskito people – or of Indians in general in Nicaragua – I am referring to the Atlantic Coast region, as opposed to the Pacific Coast region. Our country is situated in the Atlantic Coast which for centuries has been known as "La Moskitia." Most of the people there are Moskito, but there are also many Sumu and Rama Indian villages, and some Blacks or creoles and some ladinos.

AN: How many Indian people live in this region?

Wiggins: Approximately one hundred fifty to two hundred thousand. They are spread out over a very large area, maybe 150 villages, some on the coast, others deep in the woods and jungles.

The difference which I point to between the Pacific and the Atlantic regions are that the Pacific Coast was invaded and conquered by the Spanish, and they were extremely brutal in their treatment of Indians. Their design was to enslave the Indians first, and then assimilate them.

On the Atlantic Coast, our contact was with the English. The English policy towar[illegible] the Indian was more lenient th[illegible] the Spanish policy. They were [illegible]ling to tolerate the self-identity [illegible]ndian people – our languages, [illegible]customs. Also, of course, our wa[illegible]s were strong, and our territorie[illegible]ur environment, can be very hostil[illegible]s peoples who are not indigenous [illegible] the area.

From the earliest times of contact in the 16th Century, our people resisted penetration. The conquest of the Pacific Coast by the Spanish and by the Catholic church was nearly complete. As a result, it was passed down to us by the grandparents that the Catholic church had destroyed the Indian cultures there. Traditionaly, the principal enemies that we identified were the Spanish and the Catholic church.

The English, at that time, were enemies of Spain. They sought political alliances with the Miskitos and they also sought to penetrate our territories. They came in first as traders, then as missionaries from the Moravian church. This is the way Christianity came in. Not as forcefully as the Catholic, not as pressured, but it came in and became established, ultimately displacing much of our Miskito religion.

I have to say that historically there was a difference [between the Catholic and Moravian churches.] In our region our language, much of our culture, our economic way of life, survived. Yes, many of our people are Christianized through the Moravian missions, but our identity as Moskitos remained. It continued and we have our customs, habits and common concerns.

AN: So La Moskitia has always had an identity distinct from Nicaragua?

Wiggins: Yes. La Moskitia. This is the name for our country, where our villages are located, where our people live.

AN: And Nicaragua?

Wiggins: Well, Nicaragua too. One thing has been super-imposed [illegible]ne other. So we are claimed as [illegible]rt of Nicaraguan territory. Thi[illegible] happened over the [illegible]ven our people – they may centuries. [illegible]re Nicaraguan. But then, we are say, M[illegible]to first. You see, one thing is plain reality. Our identity is absolute. The other – the one of being a Nicaraguan – that one just happened. It is there, but it is not essential in the everyday.

AN: What was the influence, then of the Moravian Church?

Wiggins: For over two hundred years, the Moravian Church pastors were our leadership. Of course, there was not much need at that time for political direction. Our way of life – the subsistence economy – just went on, decade after decade.

You know, the racism, the way we have been considered inferior, the way we have been disregarded... well, this has been a way to, as they say, "guard our treasure." This fact of being isolated has helped us to maintain our culture, our language, our values, our structures as a people. Up to 1972 there was no independent Indian organization. Practically, the villages were controlled by the church, and the church leaders had the last word on everything. Everybody had to follow the orientation of the church leader, or the village pastor.

Of course, there were many injustices. But no one could really speak out. The village pastors were, most of them, Indian, but they had to follow the church leadership out of Puerto Cabezas, and the people in those positions were mostly North American. Now, to be fair, I would have to say that the church did both good things and damaging things for our people. Let me say the good things first. During the forty-five years of the Somoza government and the governments before the Somozas, our region was either marginated, ignored or exploited. Our wish to improve our conditions was paralyzed, like a wall. What the governments did was to encourage people from the Pacific Coast, ladinos who were more educated, more worldly than we, to come and take lands that were ours and to take charge of administrative posts that effected us. They would become the political leaders in the

area, and then pretend to represent us in the national congress, speaking out for us, for the poor Indian, to get money. Of course, the money stayed in their pockets. It never made a difference for us.

Land was the big thing. They knew our area was very exploitable, and so the plan was to turn this area into national lands. In reality, they would just take the land. Pacific Coast people, who were Somoza's military, became the biggest land-holders in our region. Most of them were colonels, majors, officers from the rank of captain and up. These were many of the Somoza military who had fallen from favor and were being punished by being sent to our region. So, what I am saying is that we got the worst of the worst, the ones under punishment. And they looked at Indians as dirty, inferior, easy to fool.

What good the church did was to set up two hospitals – good ones – both run by Moravians. And they also set up two schools, which although they were church-oriented, provided the first and only opportunity for our young people to get an education. Many of our young activists, including myself, came through those schools. So, to be fair, those were the good things.

The bad things [involved the way] their missionaries kept control of our villages. The Indian pastors, for instance, were never given much education, just enough to follow the directives of the church leadership. So they could not become real leaders of our people.

AN: What happened in 1972? Why was that a turning point?

Wiggins: Around 1972, an obvius trouble surfaced for our people. Somoza gathered his forces and organized the National Institute of Development which, according to them, was to plant pine trees in our area. Well, at that time we were not prepared enough, we were not educated enough, to see our rights. Also, we were too Christianized, in that way that says, "well, God will take care of it." We were taught not to fight. So, the people from the Pacific took the opportunity and cleared out much of our lands. Somoza brought in multinational corporations like NIPCO (Nicaragua Lumber and Pine Company) which is not Nicaraguan but was owned by U.S. people. They cut down our pine trees, and according to Nicaraguan law, they were supposed to replant one or two new trees for everyone they cut. But instead they paid that money to Somoza. When the transnational companies pulled out, much of our timber had been destroyed.

Later, INFONAC (Institute of National Development) came in again. They had a lot of money and they came with the idea that the land which they had cut before belonged to them and not us. They said, "we need this land now to plant pine trees for the future of Nicaragua. You cannot touch these trees." Of course, this was a shock to us. For one thing, we were used to cutting our own pine trees to bury our dead in ... and even this we could not now do. Our people began to protest. At the same time there was a big push from the Somoza government, preaching that the Indian language should disappear because it was the Indian language that was causing our "backwardness." So they were saying we should speak Spanish and teach the young people that being Indian was not good.

Things got hard and as people became more aware of this – and not only us, the young activists, but also the Moravian preachers, the Indian ones – a move began to counter this trend, to teach our people more unity, more feeling of being a nation, [and respect for] our culture. This is where the idea came from to organize ourselves. It came right from our communities, as a response to this new condition. It did not come from outsiders. The idea came from the people because it was getting to the point that our identity was in danger.

This is where Alpromisu started. It happened in an Indian village, not in the cities. we called all the leaders that we thought could help the people organize and we presented the problems. The problem of land rights, of our youngsters losing their identity, the problem of the church using the Indian people, and the problem of how to deal with the Somoza government. At this large meeting, the people agreed that such an organization should be created, whether Somoza wanted us to or not. An Indian organization. This work started at that time. It was difficult for us, very difficult, because the Somoza repression was coming down on us. There was a big propaganda [campaign] from the Pacific that the Indian people were trying to bring the British government into the area again. This was a lie, one that they could use to mobilize Nicaraguans to oppress us.

Our young people really responded. we organized and grew very rapidly. Each community had a sub-committe which worked with a central coordinating office in Puerto Cabezas, although the decision-making came from the villages. Soon, all the villages were working with us. When the politicians showed up to bribe them with coffee and rum, the people would turn them out. At our assemblies we would have representatives from every village, and many of the villages are quite isolated, hard to reach. You have to sail. We have our own dugout canoes. So the coastal villages, we go by the ocean, sailing. Inland, you go by foot, or canoe on the swamps and lagoons. It sometimes takes days.

Our villages have no electricity, no running water. None of them. No highways. Also, we do not have shopping areas. We hunt, we fish, and we plant. The Indian life, particularly now that the game is no longer as abundant and, too, our land base is reduced, the Indian life is a hard one. But it is ours, and we love it. The subsistence life. The values of that life. We, as Indians, love it. This is one of our problems with the Western people.

As Indians, we understand that this is what we are fighting for. Our culture must survive, so we can continue to exist. The contemporary organizing sought to revitalize our religion, our culture, the way of our grandparents – how they did everything, the old stories, the reasons for the different customs. We, the young organizers, made a commitment to study this carefully, so our work could be based on our own past, so we could recover more and more of our identity. We went to those few isolated communities where the traditional dances are still done. We spoke with the old story tellers. This we did consciously, as one of our primary responsibilities as organizers of the Miskito people. As a result of this, many of our young people underwent a change of religion, rejecting Christianity for our own ways.

Our celebrations, our culture, began to come back more and more. Of course, this also caused conflicts for us with the Moravian Church. Later, too, this was to be a major source of conflict with the Sandinista authorities. Through this cultural revitalization work, we had begun to organize an Elder's Council in every village, and were working to have these Elders Councils become the base of authority for own own work. The Sandinista, particularly the Internal State Security, attacked this organization of elders' councils as a counter-revolutionary concept, as a "backward" concept, [and it] came to be that the only authority allowed in our territory was to be the Sandinista military people. That was one of the basic conflicts.

Because in our territories, our belief is, we are free. That is our way.

Sometimes we plant. We start working on our lands during the dry season, to clear the lands and to plant, so we can have food to eat for the rest of the year. And, when we finish doing that, while the crops are coming up, some of the men will go and work in Puerto Cabezas and the other market centers for a short time to have money for the hollidays and such. But they don't like to be in the city. You can see it. They come back right away. They don't like the city life, and really cannot survive working day after day for a rich man. They are not used to accepting orders, or being a wage slave, like a peasant. They are free men. They go hunting for meat – and for that day, the community will all have meat, or fish. And, in the afternoons, they like to get together and talk, visit each other, tell stories, play games. And that's the life of the Indian people.

AN: If your territory were guaranteed, could your people maintain this way of life and improve on it?

Wiggins: Oh yes. That is what we want. Of course, considering factors such as population growth and the best use of land to feed the future population. In our ways, we take care of our resources. We fish and we hunt to eat, not to destroy. This is why we must secure our territory. We know that the people who look at our lands as belonging to the future of Nicaragua, we know they won't know how to keep our resources. In a few years time we won't have anything. Like now, we can still go out on the lagoons and with a paddle turn up some shrimp to eat. If big fishermen come what would happen is they bring their fishing boats with large nets and in a few years th shrimp will be gone. See, we do things in the normal, natural way, in small

amounts, on a small scale.

We look at their lakes and see them polluted, destroyed by chemicals, and the land too. And [we] see that our territory will go through the same process, that our Indian people, most of them will die out because we know that we are not campesinos (peasants) – we will die out. That is what our people fear and that is why they will die to defend their land. We are saying, and you hear this very commonly, "if they take away our land, better not even to live."

For us, it is a constant and widely held value to consider the land and the natural elements as the most important thing. We live with those elements, we depend on them, so they are part of us. It is what the Creator provided for us.

AN: What was Alpromisu's participation in the anti-Somoza struggle?

Wiggins: The struggle that we carried out, through Alpromisu, was constant and deep. We fought Somoza every way we could, as individuals in the armed conflict and also through the courts. As an organization, however, we were conscious that we were not developed enough, we were not old enough (we were only 7 years old) to initiate and maintain an armed struggle. To take on Somoza frontally, as Alpromisu, we understood would be to bring on undue repression, and probably through aerial bombardment on many of our isolated villages. So we made a policy of allowing individuals to join the open armed struggle, but not as an organization. In our area, the military presence was minimal most of the time and we did not want to bring more of it. In the Pacific, it was more intense, the warfare was open.

So, we were isolated, in great measure, from the active armed struggle. Not only we Indians, but the whole Atlantic Coast, Blacks and ladinos included. And the truth is that the Sandinista cadres hardly approached our region. It was not a priority zone for them. The incidents of repression occurred, but they were also of an isolated nature, not massive, bloody campaigns like those that Somoza carried out elsewhere in the country.

AN: Would you consider it accurate to describe the Alpromisu struggle against Somoza as a parallel struggle to the Sandinista, rather than part of the same revolution?

Wiggins: Yes, exactly. And from our own experience because of our suspicions of the ladino generally, because of our geographical isolation, and because of the lack of clear ideological definitions between the Indian cause and the left.

AN: What needs to be clarified in that context?

Wiggins: Well, first of all, the attitude on the part of many left leaders that the Indian position is "primitive." Then the question of assimilation into the proletariat, the peasantry. The left position that we can only exist within that context. And that the Indian people should incorporate themselves into their proletarian struggle.

AN: What do you think they consider "primitive?"

Wiggins: They consider it primitive that Indian people would find nothing wrong to live in a community where there is no electric light, where the economy is one of subsistence, and where we don't produce or don't have sufficient capacity to produce a surplus for the national economy. So, they say we are to blame for the "backwardness" of Latin America, and we must be forced to become producers for the state.

AN: Progress or the good life is defined by them by the market economy and industrialization?

Wiggins: Yes.

AN:Dr. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz has made accusations that Alpromisu was compromised as an organization because it received funds through the Alliance for Progress Campaign. Would you respond to this?

Wiggins: Alpromisu, as an organization, was open to any kind of help, as long as that help did not interfere with our philosophy and objectives. This is not so difficult to understnd. Poor people, Native peoples – everyone has to do this at some point or another. Like the Mapuche might receive a grant from the Inter-American Foundation, which is a government thing. Or the World Council of Indigenous Peoples might receive funds from the Canadian government. This is something that happens. To pretend to accuse Alpromisu of being controlled or in any way compromised is to ignore reality. After all, the Sandinista organization received funds from all over the world – even AID. So, why can't an Indian organization receive help, so long as that help does not alter its political objective? This was a very clear question for us. We were not about to let Kennedy's Alliance For Progress come and organize our peoples. We, Alpromisu, grew out of totaly indigenous roots, and we knew, quite well, what the CIA was, and what manipulation is all about. To make the accusation that we would be so easily

manipulated displays in itself a very condescending, or worse, manipulative attitude.

AN: When the Somoza regime fell, how did things evolve?

Wiggins: With the triumph of the revolution, especially in the Atlantic Coast, the Sandinistas did not come in for about two weeks.Our people were very positive toward them. In fact, they went to get them in the mountains, to bring them to Puerto Cabezas, the city, because we had heard them express on the clandestine radio that they wer fighting a revolution of the poor, and who is more poor than the Indian? We were hopeful that now there would be a just policy toward the Indian people of Nicaragua and also that Nicaragua [would become] an example to the many Indian people in struggle in the rest of North, Central and South America.

In the first year, we began to work toward building a good alliance, with the idea that we would maintain our own organization. We were hopeful but we were not going to forget that it was just one more government, and history has taught us to be cautious about the government. The problems of Indian peoples theoughout the Americas, as you know, in relation to national governments have been continuous. We began to discuss this in the various villages with the idea that we would support the Nicaraguan Revolution, not judging it as a Sandinista revolution but rather as a Nicaraguan revolution and looking to work out a relationship of mutual respect.

I have to say that within our organization we had much debate about this because many of our young people who had fought for the Sandinistas in the Pacific were very much pro-revolutionary, while the older ones advised caution in our involvement as Indian people. Steadman Fagoth, I should mention, was one of the young brothers who was most radically pro-Sandinista, along with Brooklyn Rivera and Hazel Lau. Myself, I was more with the group that wanted to proceed cautiously, thinking that we should support the revolution -- but not quite give ourselves totally. I thought we should be good allies but maintaining our right to criticize.

AN: Can you detail, for us, the events that led up to the open conflict between MISURASATA and the Sandinista Front?

Wiggins: I will try. The whole process is complex and has to be understood not only in the context of the history and conflicting philosophies we have already talked about, but also that everything did not happen at once. There were a series of events - some mistakes but others of a quite deliberate nature on the part of the government - which led up to the open conflict.

Like I said, even inside our organizatin we were discussing which way to go. One problem, the initial problem, was about some of the people who were opportunists. Some [people] had been Somoscistas right to the last moment. Then, as the revolution won out, they became more ardent Sandinistas than anybody. Right away they wanted to reorganize our organization to fall within the Sandinista umbrella. There was some confusion. Some of these people were genuine in their regard for the Sandinistas, others were known opportunists who were jumping on the bandwagon.

AN: Steadman Fagoth, the Misurasata leader now in exile and a prominent anti-Sandinista agitator, where did he fit in all this?

Wiggins: Steadman Fagoth at that time wa an ardent Sandinista. [He was] agitating toward new leadership in Alpromisu, people who were identified with the Sandinista Front. Now, inside this division, it is important that, from the beginning, the Sandinistas were pressuring to erode the independence of our organization. As they would see our internal differences, they would argue against any kind of "Indian" organization. "Why do we need that?" they would ask us, even then. "Before the revolution, yes," they would say. "It was necessary then. But not now, because we are all the same now."

Around that time, in November of 1979, we had a general assembly of our organization, with the participation of 112 Indian communities, more than 700 leaders, and we presented this question for debate. Commander Daniel Ortega was present from the Sandinista Front. Commander Ortega was one of the ones who previously stated that it was his wish to do away with our organization, that everyone should instead belong to the mass organizations.

In meetings around our region, however, and particularly in a meeting with some leaders, Ortega was told that it was not quite that simple and that such a position would cause him great problems in the Atlantic Coast. Still, at our assembly, he was adamant tht he did not want to listen to the leadership but wanted to hear directly from the villages, from the ones "who got there without shoes, the ones from the mountains. What did they think," he asked, "about the organization Alpromisu?"

The people spoke then, especially the old people, in our own language, and they told him that, for them, Alpromisu was the only organization that looked after their interests as Indians, that understood their way of seeing the world, and especially the issue which is of utmost interest to all Indian peoples, the land. They told him that nobody would allow this organization to be destroyed, that first they would have to kill all the Sumus and all the Miskitos. Commander Ortega, now coordinator of the government junta, changed his position then. All right, he said, keep your organization. But, he insisted, we must at least incorporate the Sandinista name. Thus Misurasata. There was even some opposition to this, although the majority sentiment at that time was very hopeful about the revolution, and there was much happiness among poor people about it. The people did approve this unanimously as a recognition of the revolutionaries that had ousted Somoza. And even though back in the communities there were people who criticized us for even participating in a goverment [organization] the majority of the Indian people were still hopeful.

Myself, I took to heart some of these criticisms, too, but felt that as long as we were clear in our objectives and in our posture in regard to the people we represented - the Indian people - that, really, the name we used was unimportant. And, in any case, the idea was that even this name could be changed if the situation of trust between the government and ourselves changed. At this same assembly, the new leaders were chosen. Steadman Fagoth was chosen as the General Coordinatoor of Misurasata, and this happened right in front of Daniel Ortega and other Sandinista commanders, including Father Ernesto Cardinal, the Nicaraguan Minister of Culture, and they approved it. The only thing Ortega said was that Fagoth was too aggressive and should calm down a bit so as not to antagonize people.

This is important to look at, because Fagoth has since been accused of being a Somoza agent and as proof, the government offers documents which were captured after they took Managua in July, 1979. But this assembly was in November, and the documents had been in their position since July - four months.

I have to say that this particular meeting was very positive. The Indian people presented a very successful cultural program and there was much dialogue with the Sandinista commanders who remained with us until 2:00 in the morning. Our people thus began with much trust in the Sandinista leadership. Never would we have believed the way it would develop from there and especially the events of February, 1981.

But, at that time, we began to work. We began to reorganize as Misurasata. We divided the coast into five regions - Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas, Lower Rio Coco, Upper Rio Coco and The Three Mines, with the center office located in Puerto Cabezas. Each region had two representives and also there were three coordinators for the whole and who had been chosen at the same November general assembly. There were the three co-ordinators and ten regional representatives - a council of thirteen. This functioned very well. We worked quietly and wanted to reinforce the organization because we knew we had many enemies still, leftover Somocistas, some of whom were in positions of authority within the revolutionary government.

AN: How did it happen that Somocista sympathizers ended up in the Sandinista structure?

Wiggins: It's like all the ladino-Indio relations. The ladinos had more education, more relations. With the Somoza people they were the ones who entertained, who

had business dealings, all of that. When the Sandinistas came here they just switched hats and began doing the same things. You know, they spoke Spanish very well, so all of a sudden they were more Sandinista than anybody. Of course, they were against the Indian, as before. We had obstructed their schemes before every time we could. Now we knew we must organize fast or lose out to these enemies.

AN: This is interesting--how sell-outs and opportunists can take advantage of any situation...

Wiggins: Yes. And this is a condition not only in Puerto Cabezas, but in all of the larger indian communities.

In 1980, then, the idea came up, nationally, for a Council of State--where all political parties would be represented and where the new laws would be enacted. So, our preoccupation was that indian people had to have representation in this Council of State. And that it should be an indian doing this and not a ladino speaking for the indians, like was done during the time of Somoza.

We communicated this wish to the government leaders and it became a big struggle with the ladino Somocista elements in our region who wanted to chose their own man for this seat. But, we won out and the government gave us the green light--and we called a new general assembly of MISURASATA.

Aside from the Council of State, there is also the House of Government, ancther representative body. The government also asked us, MISURASATA, to send a representative to this body. This position was to coordinate the work of heads and mayors of Atlantic Coast municipalities, to look after the needs of the indian people in the Atlantic Coast and also to assist them when they came into Managua for any reason.

Up to around that time, things were still very hopefull, we were actually very happy. We could see it functioning--one could see a political pluralism actually working in Nicaragua--anything affecting the Atlantic Coast, they would consult with us first.

So, there was a general assembly in Spring, 1980, and the people named Steadman Fagoth as representative of the Atlantic Coast in the Council of State and they named me as representative to the House of Government. Then, Brooklyn Rivera was named to replace Steadman as General Coordinator of MISURASATA.

Again, for a second time Steadman Fagoth was chosen for a major post without any objection from the Sandinistas--no accusations, no information coming out at this time, that he was a former somocista. And by this time, I am sure the Security people had to have gone through all the Somoza archives. So, if there was something to be known about Fagoth, they knew it. Yet, they accepted at that time that Fagoth should hold such an important post within the Council of State.

The organization continued the work of consolidation of our base and began to promote indigenous organizers in every community. We also began to presure the government over the national literacy campaign that the Sandinistas were promoting.

The conflict there had to do with our language, which is, to us, the primary source of identity and culture. The ex-somocista elements, locally, had begun to propagandize to the government tat 90% of our people spoke Spanish. Well, this is just not true. They were saying this as a way to force Spanish literacy campaigns upon our communities. We opposed it.

AN: What is the actual percentage of Spanish speakers in the indian communities?

Wiggins: Later, we did a study of this question, all over La Moskitia--and came out with slightly over 5% of actual Spanish speakers. So, we had a basic issue and, at that time, Steadman Fagoth responded very militantly, attacking those ex-somocistas openly and some by name, specially the professor who had been chosen to head ANDEN (Association of Nicaraguan Educators), who had been an open supporter of Somoza, as an election campaign judge.

We also went from office to office in the Atlantic Coast and in Managua--looking to explain our position and to convince the Sandinista leadership that our people would not conform to this type of literacy campaign, that it was impossible to carry on this campaign only in Spanish--that it was akin to having the Nicaraguan campaign carried out in French. That if they would allow us to conduct the campaign, instead, in our mother tongues - we would give all our organizational support to that work.

But in this instance, the Sandinista commandeers went against us -- and so -- the campaign was done in Spanish first.

They sent in the first literacy volunteers into our communities -- but the people would not accept. It just didn't work. The first wave of volunteers went back and they then sent other ones, university students, to see if they could convince the people. But they were also rejected -- the people demanding literacy in their own languages.

The struggle over this, I should state, was carried out in private - between MISUARASATA leadership and SANDINISTA leadership. Not too much is known publicly about it - so, many people, including many Miskitos, don't know the part we played in it and assume that the literacy campaign which finally did take place in the Indian languages and which further developed our written grammar was the government's doing.

In fact, we had a grammar from years before -- and had even recognition of the Miskito language as a language -- rather than a dialect, like they like to call our languages.

Even according to their rules, if we are to go by them -- by the Spanish Royal Academy, the requirements of a language are: 1) The language group must have more than 50,000 members; 2) must have their culture and way of life, and; 3) must have a written grammar. So even according to <u>their</u> rules, we have a recognized language. And so, it was even more difficult for us to listen to their claims later that the literacy campaign in Miskito was done because they, the Sandinistas, had wanted it that way. Because, we fought hard for that reality.

AN: During what months did the Miskito literacy campaign take place?

Wiggins: If started in October of 1980, at the conclusion of the one done in Spanish -- and the end, well, we didn't finish, because that was to happen on 28th February, but on the 19th was when they started to arrest us. And this was the roots of the open conflict.

So, to continue. As I've said, 1980 was a year of reorganization for the Indian communities. Among these tasks, of that time was to promote a youth wing of MISURASATA, and also MISURASATA unions, to deal with the problems of Indian miners, divers, and fishermen. We worked, too, with the problems of our people that had been marginated, abandoned, also had lost good health as a result of employment.

AN: These mining and fishing companies -- were they nationalized right away, by the new government?

Wiggins: Yes. That had happened already. They were all state-run enterprises. Most of them were in bad shape (as was all of the Nicaraguan economy) -- and two of the three gold mines, in particular, were bankrupt. One called Bonanza, was running well. So we had inherited a very bad situation in these enterprises from the Somoza years -- we could see that all the worst jobs, the most dangerous and unhealthy jobs -- these were the ones that went to the Indians.

AN:How may Indian miners are or were there?

Wiggins: Probably a little more than one thousand.

AN: And fishermen or divers?

Wiggins: That's hard to say -- because in their case, most of the times, they were not so much employed for wages -- as just kept in perpetual debt. One company, for instance, created a group of divers by giving them liquor and keeping them drunk out to sea. Drunk and in debt -- so if the did not want to go out -- the Somoza National Guard forced them -- like slaves.

Of course, many of these conditions changed considerably with the revolution; while others remained the same.

One big conflict was with the mining companies. I remember in February of

1980, we began to struggle with the government about the mining process, which was discharging all its waste into the River Bambana -- where the majority of the Sumu communities are located. It happened around that time that in one single day more than twenty children died -- because our people drink the water right from the river. We don't have wells or dams -- we live right from the river. This was in the dry season and the volume of water was down -- so the chemicals (arsenic, eds.) took their toll. These are extremely toxic chemicals they use to extract the gold -- so strong that upon drinking it -- your internal organs would literally dry up. I remember another day seeing 8 coffins in just one Sumu community. So, this really hurt us - and we looked, and not militantly - for government support -- to do something about this problem, snce we had no other source of water. And, in any case, these chemicals were also destroying the fish and other wildlife, upon which the Sumu depended for subsistence.

The reaction to our questions was extremely defensive. They didn't look for a way at all. They said, instead, that we had no proof; and that in any case, it was beyond their ability to stop the mining because the gold was too important to the national economy, that it was necessary for bringing in foreign exchange, particularly U.S. dollars.

So, we are starting to notice that our people were still expendable when the situation pitted us against the interests of the national government. We began to ask ourselves, more and more, about the ultimate justice of the revolution.

Again, at the time, it was Steadman Fagoth who was most open and public in his interrogation of the government. That is Fagoth's aggressive nature. He went public in his defense of the communities.

Like this, there were a variety of incidents that left us dissatisfied. In another community on the Rio Coco this happened: it had to do with the ex-Somocista opportunists.

There was a woman mayor who had been a Somoza judge for many years. She was even fond of saying that Somoza was her father. This woman had been for years at odds with an Indian leader, an older man by the name of Lester Athers, also an ardent Somoza enemy. At the fall of Somoza, the people in the community named this man as the "Elder" of the village. The woman ended up as an exile in Honduras. But her family went over to the Sandinista side, her son becoming a military man.

In the confusion of the first months, with the Sandinista just arrived from the mountains -- this fellow denounced the Indian leader as a Somocista and accused him of having been a guide for the National Guard. The Sandinistas immediately had him arrested, they took him to Puerto Cabezas and there he was shot to death.

There were several cases like this, and our organization began to pressure the Sandinista Commanders, particularly Commander Manuel Calderon who covered up the unjust killing by informing the relatives that the elder had been sent to Managua.

Commander Daniel Ortega personally interfered for us in these cases, and we were able to resolve some. Also, we found out the fate of our elder. You can imagine the feeling of betrayal, even with the understanding that we had that the tragedy was caused more by confusion than by design. But, even at that, we remained private, still pursuing the policy of trying o work within the left. Another individual we were able to free was tortured badly and came out an invalid. We pressured for the removal of the military commander who had deceived us and for punishment against the woman judge's son who had caused so much grief with his lies, but it never happened. In fact, the false accuser was transferred to Puerto Cabezas where he had the gall to intimidate the dead man's relatives with his army-issue M-16 rifle and Commander Calderon was sent away only briefly to Cuba for some kind of traning and is now back in charge in the Atlantic Coast. The body of the executed elder, Lester Athers, was never returned. In January of 1981, a young Miskito boy was machine gunned by a soldier for not halting when ordered.

But the biggest conflict was, as usual, over land. Contrary to all its preaching, the revolutionary government began to institute laws that threatened our land base and natural resources. The Indian people became increasingly agitated to the point that the prevailing opinion in the communities was that it did not matter what laws were passed in Managua, that within our territories, they would not be enforced. The elders talked up the organization and admonished the young people to remain adamant. Also in 1980, after the founding of the Council of State, there was a ministry formed without our consent called INNICA - Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast. My own function at the House of Government was minimized and the miister of INNICA, William Ramirez, was chosen from the Pacific Coast and was unfamiliar with our Indian reality.

Now we really began to worry because the isolated incidents had become a trend right out of the central government in Managua away from cooperation and consultation and instead attempting to officially undermine our organization. Everything out of Managua was going now through INNICA and not MISURASATA. We knew we were being isolated.

AN: Do you think that by that time the Sandinista leadership was considering their earlier recognition of MISURASATA a mistake?

Wiggins: Yes, I believe so. I think it scared them that our base was so well-consolidated and we were too independent. They wanted all the peoples' organizations to fall right into step and we could not. We were historically and culturally bound to maintain our special concerns over our land base, over our way of life, our cultural identity, [all of] which seemed to be concepts irreconciliably at odds with a materialistic doctrine. See, and this is important: with the advent of the Sandinista revolution had come a new form of state organization, one which demands total mass participation - the whole population, in this case, of Nicaragua - must be mobilized under the ideology, the organization, the banners, the slogans of the Sandinistas. This new state mentality pretends to come to the Indian and to quickly form a new man, a new Indian. A "new" Indian who is not an Indian, should not think too much as an Indian, but should become of the campesino (peasant) group or what is called the great proletariat.

This is the new ideological context for us, and of course it hs produced tension, shock. This penetration of this new culture threatened our people, our form of life, which in our villages was inherited from our parents. This is a shock. Almost every village has had this experience. The Sandinista way of being confronting the Indian way of being. So the problems surfaced. Our people had immediate fears, doubts. They started to protest against this new element.

By the end of 1980, tensions were rising. We had noticed that the word Indian or indigenous had been dropped from the vocabulary, like we no longer existed, but only the word "peasant" was used. The Sandinista commanders, in their meetings with us, became totally candid, stating plainly that the Indians are the cause of the backwardness of Latin America, that we would never be recognized as peoples, well, like that. Naturally, this position was not public, but only in conversations with our leaders.

The approach next was to try to incorporate our leadership into the administrative posts inside INNICA. This didn't work because we were very clear that that maneuver would place us all under the direction of the Minister William Ramirez, who has an anti-indian position.

So, they were worried that whatever plans they had for the Atlantic Coast would be impossible without the approval of MISURASATA. And this was the sense of all the various Sandinista politicians in the area.

At about the same time, MISURASATA was carrying out a very comprehensive survey of our land base to be able to clear up to the government the locations and boundaries of all our villages. Also, the literacy campaign carried out in the Indian languages was in its final stage. We were forging ahead, were very organized, and were beginning to formulate the direction of the work of MISURASATA for 1981, a direction which would deal primarily with

improving our economic and social condition. Toward that end we were planning to cooperate with government projects and to seek financial and technical assistance wherever it could be found. (The funds for the land base survey had been provided by Cultural Survival, a Boston-based anthropological organization - Ed.) It was our intention also to work closely with the Nicaraguan national economy but, as always, on the basis of mutual respect. We wanted to show that while we are not "proletariat", we could produce, and quite efficiently, as communities. And this is the kind of community-based development we wanted to follow.

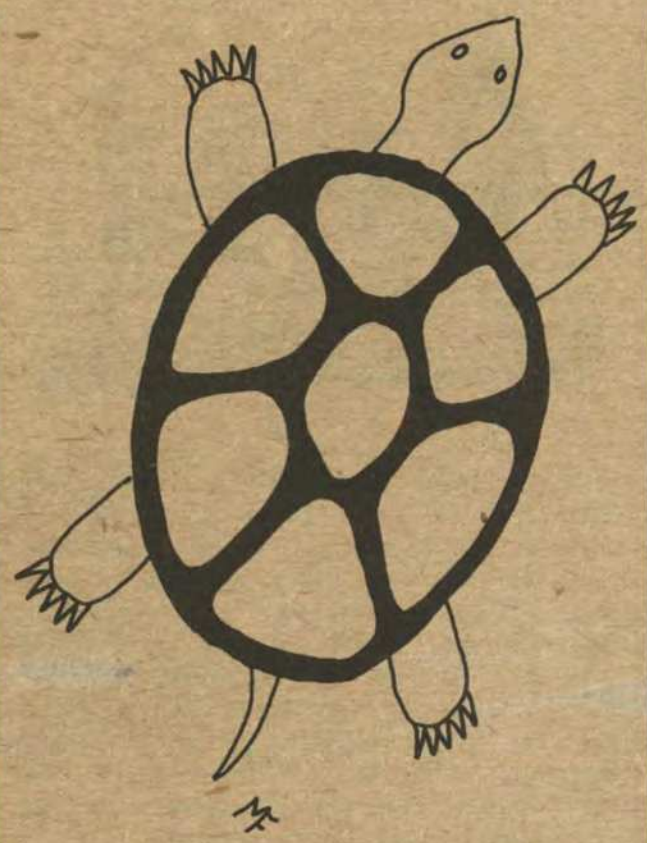
Also, we wanted to promote, vigorously, our own language and planned to present to the Nicaraguan Congress a law which would recognize Miskito as a second official language, after Spanish, and would guarantee that our pre-school education would be conducted solely in our own language. Up to fourth grade, our languages would continue to be taught. Of course, all these goals required preparation, organization. The government was not ready to do it, so we wanted to go ahead ourselves. We called together the most respected elders from each community to form an Elder's Council which would advise our young leaders about over-all direction and policy. We worked, too, to present to the government a critique of their financial expenditures in our region because we could see that most of their planning was centralized and coming out of Managua, and it was quite ineffective and wasteful.

AN: What was the government reaction during this time?

Wiggins: We could see ourselves, more and more, isolated, like they were already preparing the structures that would replace us.

One example: For instance, my position in the House of government. I was on the first floor and the top commanders on the fourth floor of the same building. At this time they made a decision to have a large meeting with all the Indians, not only of the Atlantic but also the Pacific, in Managua - and yet we were never told. They communicated, instead, with the Minister of INNICA in Bluefields, from where it is very difficult to communicate to the Indian communities. So, here we were, in the same building, duly chosen by the Indian people themselves and yet they ignored our existance. Only two days before the actual meeting did the Vice-Minister of INNICA -- who is a young man, racially but not culturally Indian -- he comes to tell us to bring our people from the coast. Of course, our reaction was: why are we here in the House of Government if we are not going to be consulted anyway?

So, this got more and more clear. As they would isolate us - we would also retreat. Because the whole point of this was to present INNICA to the Nicaraguan people as an organizer of the Indians, to minimize the role of MISURASATA. I



objected to this and spoke about their duty, as revolutionaries, to give a positive example on their treatment of Indian peoples, because all the Indian peoples in Latin America were watching Nicaragua. Also, we let them know why all their projects in 1980 had failed so miserably as a result of their centralized planning which was not consulting with the Indian communities.

And I remember that Arturo Cruz was present. He is a member of the Junta of government and now the ambassador from Nicaragua here in Washington. He agreed with us totally. And Daniel Ortega promised closer communication in the future -- but it never happened.

All of that created further friction, which the ex-Somocista opportunists used to further arouse suspicion about our so-called "Plan - 1981" -- which was, in fact, not at all counter-revolutionary and which we had, in any case, scheduled for presentation to the government.

The presentation of the results of the Land Survey and the Indian language literacy campaign were coming up too, scheduled to coincide with the return from the mountains of the Literacy campaign volunteers. So a big rally and report were planned in Puerto Cabezas and there was much excitement about this among our people but among the Sandinistas it was causing much preoccupation.

Around that time, Tomas Borge, the Minister of the Interior, attempted to hold a public rally in Puerto Cabezas. Very few people responded. He investigated the situation and was told that in that region only MISURASATA could pull out the masses. So, he made arrangements for such a rally through our organization and, sure enough, the next day, several thousand people came out to hear him.

Now, this really scared Borge, who is the only surviving founding member of the contemporary Sandinista movement. He told me personally that this had really surprised him, for he had assumed that the Sandinista Front was in control of the Atlantic Coast.

This was the situation -- and the Sandinista front felt they needed to do something. There was talk, then, of not having another Poland, you know, with the Solidarity Movement situation. There was much fear, and they looked for alternatives to replace our organization.

In January 1981 -- a young Miskito fisherman, was killed by the military -- again a wanton over reaction -- and for three days the Indian people held mass demonstrations. They were angry because the military had hidden the body and had, again, tried to cover up the incident. This was the same Military commander, Manuel Calderon, who had been responsible during the case of the Elder Lester Athars and so the people now were openly calling him out as an assassin, a murderer.

Steadman Fagoth, as usual, came out very strongly in his denunciations because there was a lot of ill feeling between the people and the military. He came to Managua along with Hazel Lau and Brooklyn Rivera. At that time I wanted to speak wih Commander Jaime Wheelock who was in charge of national direction for the Atlantic Coast, but his assistant put us off with an appointment for a later date. This appointment never took place, for on the appointed day the security forces arrested Fagoth. That night they arrested Hazel, and the next day Brooklyn, and the next day myself. Over thirty were arrested, in all, including some of the Miskito literacy leaders. Sergio Ramirez, a member of the government Junta, openly stated, "we are going to destroy MISURASATA," and it was then that the campaign against Steadman Fagoth began, accusing him of having been a Somoza agent.

That's how it came down on Steadman. Never did the Sandinistas call the MISURASATA leaders together and present them with that information. Several times, in fact, they had stood by and allowed the Indian people to place Steadman on positions of authority. Because they could have challenged him at any time. They could have involved us in this problem and we would have dealt with Fagoth ourselves according to the evidence. But no, and more and more I believe that it was a question of their wish to manipulate us. If Fagoth had played ball with the Sandinistas, I am sure he would have become their choice for very powerful positions on the Atlantic Coast.

AN: Your analysis is that they either falsified the evidence against Fagoth or held it for an opportune moment?

Wiggins: Yes, and either way, the intent was to destroy us. And I want to be clear in this. I am not defending Fagoth, but to show how the government maneuvered to destroy our organization, now they looked to compromise us, how they then propagandized to the Sumu and Rama that the Miskitos were dominating them, all that. All our leaders, every day, [there were] more arrests. One of our leaders in the Mining, Elmer Prado, they tried to arrest. He was at that time engaged in issuing certificates to the literacy students. That's where the first military

encounter took place, when the military people disrupted a religious function to try to arrest Prado. The army man fired his gun and wounded Prado, a scuffle broke out and the result was four dead on each side.

And do you know what Sergio Ramirez said? He said four "subversives" had died, not four Indian literacy leaders, but four "subversives." That's when the accusations about our "counter-revolutionary" plan, 1981, came out, about our racist, separatist movement, all of that. Things we had never even discused. But these were the charges and they were preparing to hand down ten to thirty year sentences.

But they never imagined, they never knew, how well-organized our base was. The communities began to protest immediately. Big protests, like the one in the city of Prinzapolka which was confronted by the military and in which several people were killed. Many of our young men captured military weapons, machine guns and automatic rifles, and went off to the mountains with a great deal of support from the surrounding communities. Several military and air force patrols went out after them but the could not trap them. [The government] realized that the Indian people were not giving in. In Huaspan about 20,000 Miskito and sumu held demonstrations, day and night, demanding the expulsion of the government politicians. And in Puerto Cabezas, the protests went on for nearly a week.

They released us. They sent along the documents on Fagoth. But the reaction in the communities by that time was, "if Fagoth is a Somocist, then we are Somocistas." The charges were serious and Fagoth was supposed to draw at least thirty years. He had already been removed from the Council of State, and the masses on the Pacific side fully expected this. But on the Atlantic side the protests were such that the government backed down and let him go free with the condition that he to to the Soviet Union for a five year course of study. He immediately lost himself in the communities and crossed the border into Honduras where already several thousand Miskitos were exiled.

So this is the story. A total lack of understanding of the Indian reality resulted in our present situation - a very dangerous one - wih an increased military presence in our territories and the danger of conflict looming.

AN: Is INNICA the supposed representative organization now?

Wiggins: Yes, INNICA, which is exactly like the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. [It has] the same politics. Like FUNAI or the many Indigenist Institutes all over Latin America. They hire a few sell-outs and try to institute them as administrators, but this doesn't relate to the realities in our communities. They took Marcelo Zuniga, a Sumu of this type, to Geneva [Switzerland] where he pretended that MISURASATA doesn't exist, that sort of thing. The laws that are being promulgated, like the Agrarian Reform Law, Article 31, could be modeled after

the Allotment Act of the U.S.. It provides for the splitting up of our communal lands with the resulting loss of much of the territory and is in complete opposition to our culture and traditions. Our people in the communities have retreated into a position of complete indifference to whatever laws are promulgated in the capital. They just wait, suspiciously. Of course, they are like [a man] without a head now. They retain their same attitudes and are quite hostile to the government, but it is difficult to establish coordinated direction without the leadership.

The militarization, like I said, is intensifying, causing more incidents, more deaths, more arrests , three to four hundred since January, and there are increasing cases of torture. Well, it's a very bad situation. Just two weeks ago [in October] a fifteen year old boy was killed. Still, I wouldn't say the sandinista policy is for outright military repression - at least not yet - but the army presence in itself creates its own condition.

AN: What impresses us, sadly, is that there was a process in motion there that had great promise for Central and South America, and suddenly it exploded and it got spoiled and fell into confusion and great danger. One of the confusions occurred in Geneva this past September where Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz who works with the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) appeared to take an anti-Indian position. There was, we are told, a confrontation at the conference between Hazel Lau, the MISURASATA representative, and Commander Lumberto Campbell, the Sandinista representative. It has been alleged that members of the IITC there accused Hazel Lau of being a CIA agent, as they had allegedly accused you. Would you care to comment on that?

Wiggins: You know, the Indian struggle goes back four hundred years and we are accustomed to many kinds of manipulations. It has been a constant problem for our movement that always some of our Indian brothers - either for money, for fame, or for a lack of political maturity - go against the legitimate interests of our peoples. I don't want to accuse or to speak badly of those people. But I would like to say that a true Indian leader who maintains real direct contact with his people, who has lived in the communities, who feels in his own flesh and blood, would never go against the interests of the Indian people who are in real struggle. It seems to me that feeling is very general to all the leaders in true struggle who understand that we have a common destiny, a common fight, inside North, Central and South America. I think all real Indian leaders would agree with that.

But there are some so-called leaders who live mostly in the cities and just because they have Indian blook, they take advantage of our people in order to become very visible, to put themselves above everyone else. Others have fallen into ideological dogmatism, following foreign lines of thinking and have become unable to see our reality. The way IITC has expressed a position on our case is strange to us, something we would never do about, say, a North American situation, which is much more properly analysed by North American Indians. This is a long-standing policy on our part, not to interfere in something we know nothing about. In any case, even if our Indian brothers were to be wrong in a specific case, we would, at least, never publicly come out against them by supporting any national government, whether of the left or right. And, in our experience, when an Indian People cries out for justice, it is because there is a reason.

So, it is my understanding that even the Sandinista representatives felt themselves used by the IITC -- because they had been led to believe that the IITC was leading the Indian Movement -- but, at Geneva, the Indian delegates opted to look further into our case and I think the Sandinistas understood that there was considerably more seriousness to the Indian struggle than what the IITC represented.

AN: The present situation - how would you characterize it?

WIGGINS: Very sensitive. And under scrutiny by all the Indian Peoples. Because the left has yet to come to terms with us -- will not, maybe cannot. We can see that. There is a lot more clarity needed. Because many people -- for instance solidarity groups in the U.S. -- will talk in support of the Guatemalan or Salvadorian or Nicaragua "Peoples" -- but what they really support is the left parties -- and not the struggle of the indigenous peoples -- never even mention us.

At this point, I am particularly distressed by the Declaration of Principles of the Sandinista Frente -- because it would not let us even breathe -- there is no room for us, as Indians -- from the chosen "official" language, Spanish -- to the question of lands and national resources -- which totally contradicts our survival.

AN: In past issues of NOTES, we have carried articles which analyze this basic conflict between Marxism-Leninism and the indigenous philosophies. We have come to the conclusion that there exists not so much a political conflict as a cultural conflict. And that is the conflict that must be recognized -- because on the basis of this recognition hinges the analysis of development, economy, political representation, land use - all of which have cultural roots. And the roots of the Marxism-Leninism system, for all its merits, are western roots - and the denial of the authenticity of indigenous cultures

by the West is the essence of racism in this Hemisphere.

WIGGINS: The Marxist-Leninist position -- at least as it has been expressed to us in Nicaragua -- interprets our view as "racist." This is because we oppose integration, we oppose a policy and a practice that denies our identity and that would assimilate us. So they say that the Indians are not capable of administering their own destiny. I see this as very contradictory, particularly since in Nicaragua there are Miskitos who are much better educated than many of the Sandinista administration and could easily be responsible for the Atlantic Coast. But they say we are backward, an obstacle to progress.

AN: Well, again, isn't that the essence of racism at least in the Western Hemisphere -- the denial, historically and in contemporary terms -- of the world-view expressed in the Way of Life of indigenous peoples. The Western concept, the linear, progressive view of history as an ascending staircase, the total blind faith in science. This both the capitalists and the socialists share completely -- and so they both necessarily disregard Indian philosophy and Way of Life as "primitive", as sub-human, as backward.

WIGGINS: Yes, this has been constant, even in the incidental. My own experience, for instance, working inside the Sandinista Government House for a whole year representing my people -- during that time never did the Junta or members of the National government consult with me, but rather put me off to the side, working instead with the non-Indians - Wm. Ramirez and Lumberto Campbell - to establish policy and practice for our region - even though sooner or later they would have to work with us to implement any policy in the Atlantic Coast. Anyway -- always the disregard, the discrimination - never a real attempt to work with an authentic Indian organization. Thus, the formation of INNICA - the Nicaraguan version of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

AN: That's the crux of the problem between the two cultures. It's a cultural conflict, before it is a political conflict ... no?

WIGGINS: Exactly. That is the wall we are faced with, because for as much as the Sandinistas have expressed lately that they wish to recognize their mistakes -- this recognition is simply not there and, as a whole, they are forging ahead to destroy the Indian community and transform us into proletariat.

I recommend the book written by Commander Jaime Wheelock about the natives of the Atlantic Coast - it's horrible. I am going to get it and send it to AKWESASNE NOTES -- so you read it and consider why we have problems in Nicaragua - not because the Indians have counter revolutionary leaders, but because the left had pre-developed ideas about how to make the Indian "problem" disappear - by assimilating us into the Nicaraguan mainstream. That's the problem.

One time, in a meeting with Commander Jaime Wheelock, he told us straight out -- that this nonsense had to stop, that the Indians were an obstacle to the development of Latin America. So this came out real clear -- that sooner or later we must forget all "that" --

I have a recent quote from Commander Jaime Wheelock. He said: "The problem is not Fagoth, but the Miskito people. The situation with Fagoth is conjunctural and we, as a vanguard, must give our people a political response, but what worries us is the Miskito people. See, the Miskito people are our (of the Sandinistas) people. So, if you (Indian leaders) want to work with the Miskito people, you will be obliged to be in accordance with our orientations, with our work programs; because to oppose that will always be considered separatist and racist."

AN: This takes us back to Steadman Fagoth -- his attitude, his case...

WIGGINS: This one is the one which hurt us the most -- because the Sandinistas were not straight with us -- so we ourselves could deal with it -- if there was anything to deal with. You see, it was a family thing and we were quite capable of correcting or punishing Fagoth ourselves.

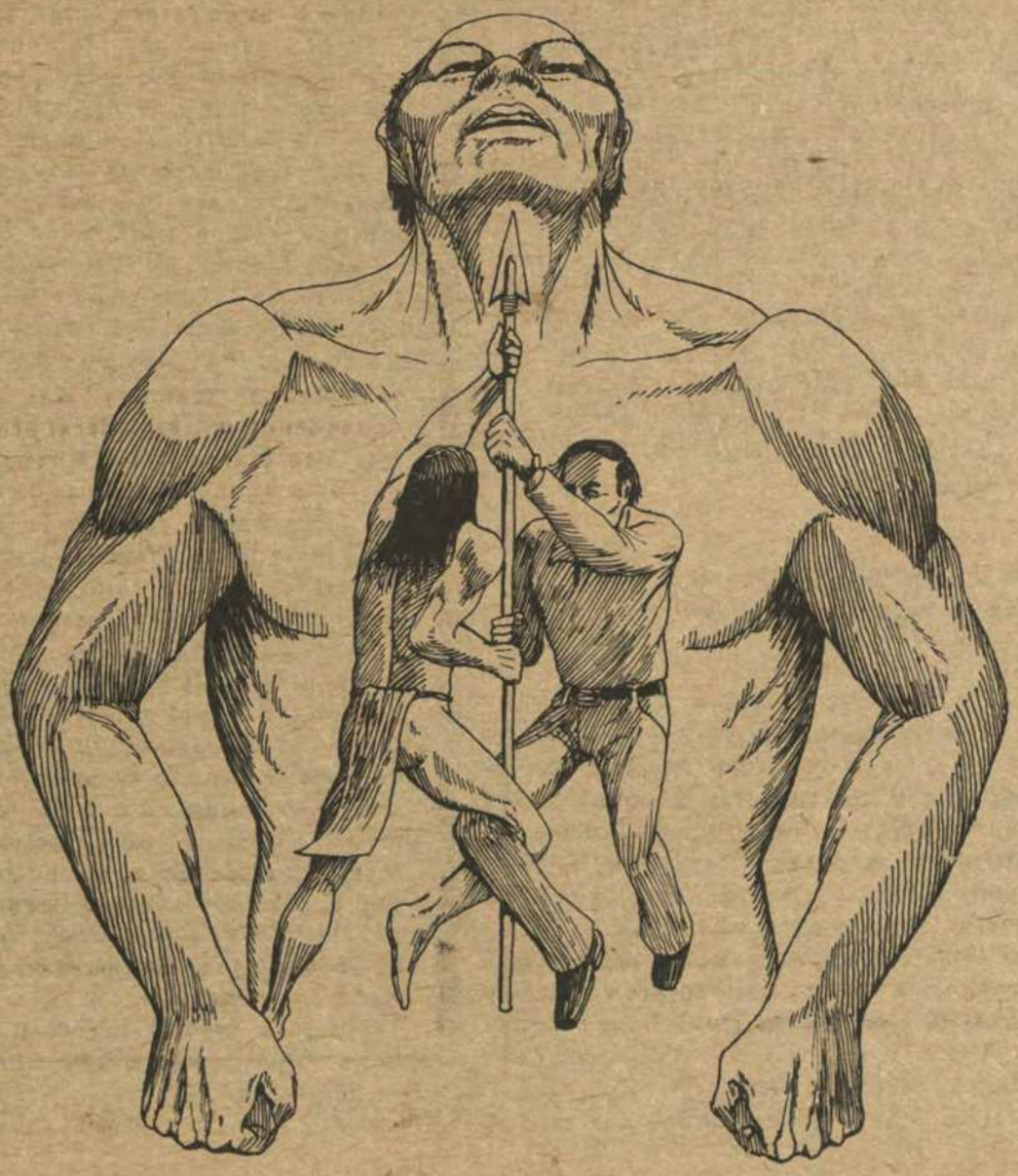
AN: What about his activities in exile -- allying himself with the counter-revolution?

WIGGINS: I'll put it this way. Lately Indians from Honduras conducted an interview with Fagoth, which was published right in Nicaragua. And they asked him -- why did your people go to Honduras; why do you talk on the right-wing radio station?

Fagoth responded: "We left for vengeance -- because of what the Sandinistas did to us..." He also said: "About the radio. In order to fight for my peoples' interest -- if that is the only radio I can use to communicate with my people -- that's what I must use. If, instead, I could use the Havanna Radio -- to communicate with my people -- I would use it. The important thing, to me, is to communicate with my people." It's like I was told recently by an Indian friend from Guatemala. "The Indians in Guatemala," he said, "We are in the guerrilla because of what the army has done to us - not because we are in agreement with the Marxist Lenninist ideology. We are fighting to avenge our dead and tortured relatives ... it is for them that we fight."

AN: The future -- how do you see it?

Wiggins: I see our immediate future as very dark. The political situation we are living is very explosive in Nicaragua. In the sense that we, as Indian people, have



had to be the first to confront, critically, a people's revolution -- a revolution that was made possible by all sectors of Nicaraguan society -- against the most bloody dictatorship in Central America, and one in which we all placed our hopes for justice -- I see that for us Indians, the immediate future is a dark one.

The revolution was very quick and bloody. Many of the best people died in combat or in the massive repression. The ones in positions of authority now - many of them - are not that qualified, not really prepared for the complex situations they must deal with. Ourselves, in our indigenous struggle, we had no real clarity in relation to the Sandinista or the left revolutionaries. We had no previous agreement. And now, they are in power - and their view is that the indigenous people are just one more sector of the proletariat -- to the point that, the don't even want to call us Indians -- but rather pretend to see us as "peasants" or as "workers" and refuse to face the fact that we are a distinct people and that by virtue of our aboriginal inhabitation we are special peoples -- with our own particular philosophy. The still do not understand us. And for our part, we don't understand the Marxist-Leninist philosophy either -- and as long as we are living in that situation -- I believe our future is very dark.

Also, for the rest of Central and South America, I believe it is very important and they are watching how the Sandinista revolution deals with Indian concerns. It is the test case - and, especially for Guatemala - where the majority of the people are Indians our advice is - that they should impose a pre-condition to their participation in struggle ... that the left groups must make their positions very clear, that the support organizations must cut through the superficial positions they now have about Indians. Because they speak on behalf of "The People" but don't really understand what the people want. Because the reality is that there are ideological differences between the Marxist-Leninist philosophies and the Indian philosophies. Differences which maybe could be overcome -- but not as long as the dogmatists are dominant. Because I think even Marx wouldn't understand the inflexibility carried out in his name and there is much in Marx that could be interpreted differently, much in the modern world that would have altered his thinking.

AN: There was no way for him to anticipate the frenetically destructive pace of development experienced since World War II and its extremely destructive side effects.

WIGGINS: Right.

AN: You know that for us here at NOTES -- it is our position that the only way to bring clarity to the questions affecting Indian Peoples is by their definition as "Nations" under international law, by their recognition as distinct peoples. For example, if the Sandinistas could arrive at a position of accepting that there exists a philosophy, a politic, a world-view innately indigenous -- throughout the whole continent -- if they could come to understand that the Miskito Nation would like to develop along its own philosophy -- could there be some kind of agreement or alliance - between the Miskitos and the Sandinistas?

WIGGINS: That is a good question. As I see it that would be our most ultimate and deepest hope. Naturally, of course, because this would also give confidence to other Indian peoples who had high hopes in a revolution such as Nicaraguas' -- knowing that this revolution had to deal with Indian people -- that it could be a primary example.

POSTCRIPT: Recent information recieved at these offices indicates that the situation between the Sandinistas and the MISURASATA is worsening. Several MISURASATA activists who had remained in Nicaragua to attempt a reconciliation have now left the country--stating in a personall letter that they could no longer endure the pressure--both from the government (which sabotaged their efforts) and their own community base (which accussed them of selling out).

ECONOMY continued from page 29

favor of someone who would have done the same thing. That argument would have carried more weight had not many of them acted so brutally against the dissenting Indians, for while the government program period was at its zenith, there was an independence movement among Indian people which swept the country and which opposed the dependence the programs created. Many, indeed most, of these politicians opposed that movement forcefully, calling the dissenters every-thing from Communists to madmen. Those dissidents were mainly traditional Indians.

The assimilation program (which is what the New Deal and the war on Poverty were on Indian reservations) created a crisis for many Indian people. During the last fifteen or so years, large numbers of Indian people have acquired houses under the housing program which require expensive oil or electric heat and which carry high mortgage or rent payments. They have bought cars, and their communities now have expensive water systems and sewage systems. People became dependent on their federally-funded jobs in order to pay the heat and grocery bills and the rent and mortgages. An alarmingly high percentage of a whole generation of Indian young people have never worked outside of the jobs they held under these programs. There are still no jobs and no industry on many of these reservations, and in many places the subsistence economy which sustained people in the past has been almost entirely destroyed. The destruction of the subsistence economy was planned, the dependency on the federal program moneys was also planned, and what remains is the hardship of the current and coming reality. That hardship is already being felt.

The cruelest blow of all may fall on the educated class of Indians, the Indian version of a middle class, those who went to collge and who have become administrators of the now threatened programs. Many of these people gave up potential careers in the "outside world" to become social change agents in their own communities at jobs which increasingly no longer exist. Some of these people have invested a decade or more in the service of the so-called "Liberal dream", and they are now finding that their education is of little use in a job market that does not need their skills.

It is a reality that Indian people are going to suffer because they have become dependent on federal dollars which are increasingly no longer available. There is o reason to believe that the period of available federal dollars will return at any time soon in the future. More likely, in the future, the amount of available federal dollars will become smaller, not greater.

In the absence of those dollars, Indian people will need to consider becoming more self-reliant. People still need to eat, and Indian people can grow food as well as anyone else. People need housing, and many Indian communities have both the materials and the manpower to build houses. This housing may not be the electric heated middle class numbers offered by the BIA, but they will keep people warmer and dryer than proposals sent to Washington for money that will never come.

The day of the "Conference Indian" is coming to a close. We no longer need people who can speak in techno-speak. There is little need now to find people who can define "goals objectification" or "interface." The needs of the people can be addressed in plain English (or better yet, plain Lakota or plain Choctaw). We need now to put away all the charts and all the manuals from Washington and all the mystifying language and to organize our people to get to work cooperatively to provide the things the communities need. The reality is that food comes from the land and housing comes from the land and the things our people need can be provided by a self-reliant and self-confident society, one which is not ashamed of its inherited culture. There is no need to mystify anyone with long and misused English words. The need is to rebuild the self-reliance of the people and to work toward self sufficiency.

The U.S. economy, indeed the world market economy, is approaching crisis. The U.S. economy doesn't generate enough wealth to support the former social programs and to fuel its war machine and to pay its debt burden and to keep the rate of inflation low enough to encourage investment in industry all at the same time. The safest ground is through the building of a strong people through self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Given the recent history and current reality of dependence, that won't be easy. But it's going to be easier than trying to turn back to clock to the days of the available federal dollars.

GENEVA 1981

FURTHER STEPS ON THE ROAD TO INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

(Report from Anthropoloy Resource Center)

Miskito (Nicaragua); Colla (Argentina); and Campa (Peru) delegates to Geneva. Hazel Lau, Miskito, is on the far left.

Much of the material on the Geneva conference commissions come to us through the courtesy of Shelton Davis, of the Anthropology Resource Center. We wish to express our appreciation for the depth and constancy of the research and writing produced by the ARC staff. Their bi-montly Bulletin, focusing mostly on the Brazilian Indian situation, is probably the single most informative source on the Indian movement there.

We urge all our readers to subscribe to the ARC BULLETIN, 59 Temple Place, Suite 444, Boston, Massachusetts, 02111. Rates are $5.00 per year United States/ $7.50 per year foreign.

One of the most important concrete results of the Conference was the recommendation of the UN Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities that an annual work group on indigenous affairs be established as part of the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN Economic and Social Council. This work group would be able to accept information from all indigenous nations, organizations, and groups; hear testimony directly from indigenous groups concerned; and recommend fact-finding missions to investigate urgent and serious situations.

The Conference's final report urged that action be taken at national and international levels to improve the access of indigenous peoples to all UN bodies and international gatherings dealing with questions concerning indigenous peoples. It further requested that questions concerning indigenous peoples receive a prominent place on the agenda of the World Conference on Racism and Racial Discrimination to be held in 1983 under the auspices of the United Nations. This World Conference will mark the conclusion of the UN Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

Finally, the Conference urged all non-governmental organizations to study the specific recommendations for action which came out of the Conference and to take appropriate measures. Four groups -- the Legal Commisson, the Indigenous Philosophy and Land Commisson, the Commission on Transnational Corporations and Their Effects on the Resources and Land of Indigenous Peoples, and the Commission on the Impact of the Nuclear Arms Build-up -- met and produced analyses and recommendations. The following are summaries of the four Commission Reports:

THE LEGAL COMMISSION:

The Legal Commission, which considered the situation of indigenous peoples' rights under international law, heard more than 40 declarations by indigenous delegates, representatives of NGO's, and observers. The sessions revolved around the concepts that indigenous peoples have a natural, original right to live freely within their own territories, and that the special relationship of indigenous peoples to their land should be understood and recognized as basic to their cultures, spiritual way of life, integrity as a people, and economic survival.

The situation of indigenous peoples under current international law is insecure. They are entitled to self-determination and to recognition as nations, according to the 1977 Declaration of Principles for the Defense of Indigenous Peoples and Nations of the Western Hemisphere, and therefore ought not to be considered as minorities or social classes and should be free from any form of colonial domination. At the same time, as delegates noted, considerable Anglo-European bias exists in international law. They therefore recommended that laws be revised to include indigenous concepts of law and fundamental rights such as communal ownership of land.

Several concrete suggestions were put forward to improve the status of indigenous peoples under international law. These included representation in the United Nations, mandatory jurisdiction over indigenous questions by the International Court of Justice, United Nations supervision of negotiations between indigenous peoples and the governments concerned, and the international recognition of the validity of treaties and agreements concluded or accepted by indigenous peoples.

The Legal Commission devoted much

"THE SESSIONS REVOLVED AROUND THE CONCEPTS THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE A NATURAL, ORIGINAL RIGHT TO LIVE FREELY WITHIN THEIR OWN TERRITORIES, AND THAT THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO THEIR LAND SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AND RECOGNIZED AS BASIC TO THEIR CULTURES, SPIRITUAL WAY OF LIFE, INTEGRITY AS A PEOPLE, AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL.

attention to the issues of self-determination and the land. Reports described how indigenous peoples continue to be deprived of their lands, or are relocated to territories inadequate to their needs and survival. Even their remaining lands are being destroyed by mineral extraction and environmental pollution.

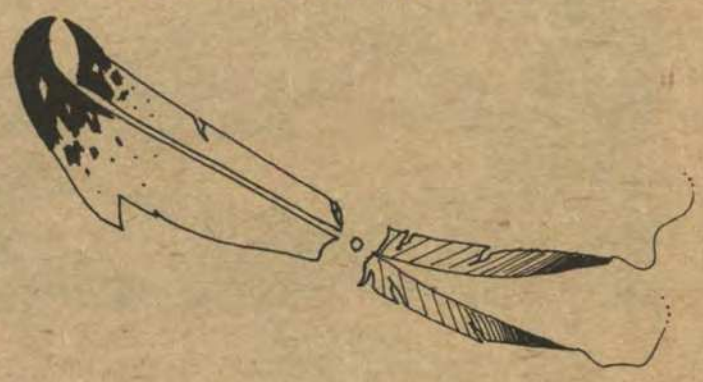
The right of indigenous peoples to self-determination is essential to their survival and prosperity. This right includes their complete control over the resources within their territories and the power to decide whether or not to develop these resources. From another standpoint, self-determination can benefit non-indigenous peoples as well; indigenous traditions concerning the land can make positive contributions to the world community.

Given that there are severe consequences resulting from land dispossession, forced integration and assimilation, indigenous peoples must have their land base restored and receive complete ownership of their land without requirements of purchase or taxation. As the Commission reported, "it is also essential that indigenous lands be continuous in order to preserve the unity of the people." Communal ownership, the essence of indigenous land rights, must be recognized nationally and internationally, as should the right to determine land tenure.

The Commission also drew attention to the particular problems arising from the existence of imposed borders cutting through the traditional territories of indigenous peoples. These borders have resulted in the separation of indigenous peoples and have prevented them from access to their traditional economies. Many delegates stressed that their right of free movement throughout the Western Hemisphere is fundamental.

Other critical issues were discussed: the large-scale and premeditated violations of land rights by governments which have threatened the very existence of indigenous peoples and which amount to genocide, as defined by the 1948 International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; state-organized and condoned violence and terror against indigenous movements and leaders defendng their lands; and non-recognition by national constitutions of the existence, land rights, and rights of self-determination of indigenous nations and peoples. Delegates demanded that these constitutions be amended to recognize and implement their rights.

Delegates stressed that indigenous nations and peoples should themselves determine, in negotiation with the governments concerned, the scope and language of the constitutional amendments. In this regard, the situation in Canada received special attention: the indigenous delegates unanimously argued that any 'patriation' of the Canadian Constitution from the United Kingdom must be preceded by constitutional recognition of indigenous rights.



THE INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY AND LAND COMMISSION:

This Commission was chaired by Phillip Deere, a medicine man of the Muskogee Creek, and a well-respected figure in the International Indian Movement. The following are excerpts from the Preamble of the Commission's Report and two statements representing the collective opinion of the participants:

"In the Universe all of its elements are collectively and communally organized; between them there is no inequality but rather different positions and situations at the same time complementing and harmonizing with each other.

"The dialectical is the general and infinite law of the Universe. Its principal characteristic is the existence of two contrary forces, and the complementary between them. It is for this characteristic, in the Universe and in nature, that everything is in order, everything is in harmony; there are no contrary elements fighting nor destruction between the same elements which generates the process of dynamic change. There is instead "complementary opposition" between the distinct elements in order to constantly generate new states, but always in harmony and always in order, not in chaos.

"From the Indian way of viewing things, humanity is a integral part of nature -- a prolongation of the Universe, according to its own laws and organizing itself in a collective and communal form.

"Being is a spiritual proposition. Gaining is a material act. Traditionally, American Indian people have always attempted to be the best people they could. Part of that spiritual process was and is to give away wealth, to discard wealth in order not to gain. Material gain is an indicator of false status among traditional people, while it is "proof that the system works" to Europeans.

"The fabric of native life consists of a tapestry woven of threads from nature -- from the land and the plants and the animals of the homeland. To tear that tapestry asunder is to annihilate the Indian. The oppressors of the Indian people are often very much aware of this fact, and the seizure of native land is often a premeditated act of ethnocide, as was the Dawes Act of the United States of America and as is the current attacks upon the collective land base of the Mapuche of Chile, the Dine (Navajo) of Arizona, the Dene and Inuit of the North, to mention only a few examples.

"The experiences of Indian people, from Chile to Canada, are filled with the documentation of what happens when the indigenous right to religious freedom and to our own culture is violated by the taking of the land to which we have often been connected for thousands of years. It is utterly hypocritical to speak of having respect for indigenous cultures when the powerful states of the Americas and the huge corporations are allowed to destroy that connection whenever they desire to exploit the timber, the minerals, the water, or the beaches belonging to Indians.

"The Indian people do not seek to acquire 'exclusive title' to all of the Americas which formerly was for their use alone. On the other hand, each native nation or nationality must possess sufficient land, guaranteed to them for their spiritual and cultural survival."

THE TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS COMMISSION:

Members of the Transnational Corporations Commission heard more than 20 presentations on corporate dispossession and invasion of native lands in North, Central, and South America, the Philippines, Australia, Scotland and Central, and South America, the Philippines, Australia, Scotland and Ireland. Testimony was given in the following areas:

(A) ENERGY resources, such as coal, oil, uranium, natural gas and hydro and geo-thermal potential. The cases included uranium exploitation in Dene, Lakota, Anishnabe, Saskatchewan Metis

and Non-Status Indians, Dine, Pueblo, Namibian and Australian Aboriginal lands; coal strip-mining on Australian Aboriginal, Dine, Crow, Northern Cheyenne and Azanian native lands; oil extraction in the North Sea, the North Slope of Alaska, Guatemala, Mexico, the Amazon Basin of South America, and Australia; and hydro-electric projects and dams which will flood the homelands of the Cherokee and James Bay Cree in North America, the Guaymi in Panama, the Kalinga Bontoc in the Philippines, the Same in Scandnavia, Akawaio in Guyana, Kaingang and Guarani in southern Brazil, and the Parakana and Waimiri-Atroari in northern Brazil.

Companies such as Rio Tinto Zinc, Union Carbide, Kerr-McGee, Exxon, Peabody Coal and Amax have made indigenous lands unfit for human habitation. They have destroyed the environment, polluted the water and air, brought disease, and invaded the sacred space and landscape on which indigenous culture and religion depend. Boom towns have sprung up in the wake of these projects, bringing with them prostitution, crime and alcoholism.

(B) OTHER MINING PROJECTS. Activities such as copper and other mineral extraction have also destroyed the land and people in many areas. In Canada, for example, the government has given permits to transnational mining companies to dump toxic wastes into the river systems of the Haida, the Nishka, and other peoples of the Northwest coast. Other groups affected by mining projects include the Lakota in North America, the Ibaloi of the Philippines, the Guaymi of Panama, the Maori of New Zealand, and Australian Aboriginals.

(C) AGRI-BUSINESS AND LOGGING. Fruit companies, such as United Brands, were cited for forcibly seizing native peoples' lands. Political manipulation of lands for corporate benefit has taken place in Nicaragua, Panama, and the Philippines. Del Monte and Castle-Coole have grabbed vast tracts of land on which they produce export fruit crops. In Paraguay, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Australia, Ecuador, and Bolivia, indigenous peoples have been denied access to their lands in order to make way for cattle ranching.

Logging companies have devastated the environments of forest-dwelling peoples and damaged the world's ecology. Examples were given from the Philippines, Nicaragua, Brazil, the United States, Canada, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and other countries. Transnationals have acted with the cooperation of the governments to sell resources with total disregard for the rights and needs of their indigenous owners.

(D) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. Lending institutions play a central role in backing the operations of transnational corporations on the lands of indigenous peoples. So-called "development" projects -- mining, forestry and hydroelectric -- are implemented through huge infusions of capitol from official and private banks interested only in gigantic returns. The actual control of many regional resource schemes, such as Northern Frontier Development in Canada, and the Amazon Development Project in South America, is in the hands of these immensely powerful institutions.

In the Philippines, an ambitious energy program to build 40 major hydro-electric dams on tribal lands was advised and financed by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development. The World Bank and European banks are funding so-called "integrated projects" in Bolivia, and providing funds for mining and hydro-electric projects in Panama.

Far from supporting the "poorest of the poor," these projects actually benefit transnational corporations, international contractors, and the local elite. Indigenous people always emerge more impoverished than before.

(E) FOOD AND DRUGS. Once strong and healthy, indigenous peoples are now on the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder in virtually every country that is dominated by transnational corporations. The Commission heard testimony on the effects of the following corporations, among others: the Nestle Corporation (baby food and formulas); Dow Chemical, Bayer Corp., and U.S. AID (birth control drugs that have been banned in developed countries due to their hazardous side effects); Dupont Corp. and Bayer, Dow Chemical, and US AID (mass sterilization of native peoples in the name of "population control"; medical experimentation); Exxon and Shell (malnutrition due to enforced unemployment); Amax, ITT, Ford, and General Motor (underemployment, cancer, and birth defects).

The Commission proposed a number of short-term strategies to combat destructive corporate activities. At the local level, these included research on transnational corporations, in locality, forming networks of sympathetic local groups and lines of communication between indigenous groups, approaching corporation worker groups for support, and symbolic legal and illegal actions. At the national level, the Commission recommended advocacy work, share-holder pressure, boycotts and sanctions, research, linking up with progressive trade unions, national peoples' tribunals, and national codes of conduct. International strategies, finally, might include a Conference of Indigenous Peoples before the UN Commission on Transnationals, establishing alternative trade relationships for the production and distribution of goods and services to replace the imposed economic structure of enforced underdevelopment.

SOUTH AMERICAN DELEGATES SPEAK OUT FOR PROPER REPRESENTATION AT THE FINAL PLENARY.

According to a recent press report, a new and gigantic program for the construction of 21 hydro-electric dams in the Brazilian Amazon will dislocate many thousands of Indian people. The program, which is under the direction of Eletronorte Company, is scheduled for completion by 1995. Dams will be constructed on all major rivers in the Amazon Valley, including the Rio Negro (Amazonas) and the Rio Jamari (Rondonia). Along these two rivers are several isolated tribal societies: the Uru-eu-uau-uau, Urupaim, Arara, and Yanomami. This month, Eletronorte intends to begin construction of a dam on the upper Mapuera River (Para), in the territory of more than 700 Carib-speaking Indians.

(Folha de Sao Paulo, 25 August 1981)

COMMISSION ON THE IMPACT OF THE NUCLEAR ARMS BUILD-UP

This Commission considered the nuclear arms race to be one of the most crucial and relevant issues of our time. The struggles of indigenous peoples for disarmament, land rights and self-determination contributes to the welfare not only of the indigenous societies themselves but also of the entire human family. By the same token the Commission stressed that all world-wide efforts against the nuclear arms build-up will benefit the struggles of indigenous movements, because the struggles against nuclear development are also against the operations of transnational corporations.

The Commission emphasized that the escalating arms race taking place on the lands and waters of the indigenous peoples represents a form of physical and cultural genocide, and must be condemned as blatant racism. The "oneness" of the land and the indivisible harmony between human life and the earth, once invaded by the so-called frontier pioneers and followed by greedy commercial, industrial and military exploitation, is now in danger of irreversible destruction by the arms race. The commission therefore drew attention to the need for a responsible stewardship of all the earth's resources in order to ensure that future generations can enjoy its beauty and fruits.

Nuclear powers vying for strategic positions throughout the world do so at the expense of indigenous peoples' basic rights. This trend has created a state of terror and psychosis among humankind.

National security doctrines must be re-examined, the Commission stated, especially with regard to nuclear development. The proposal for a nuclear free zone in both the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean cannot be achieved without the elimination of nuclear testing, weapons delivery systems, passage of nuclear warships and arms race and maximize profit margins.

The Commission denounced the actions of nuclear powers and trans-national corporations, which have always suppressed indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination. Finally, the Commission called particular attention to the dangerous relationship between the civil and military use of nuclear technology.

Specific goals raised during the testimony included the following: self-determination as a prerequisite in the struggle for disarmament; adequate compensation for land taken by governments and corporations as testing sites and weapons storage facilities; a halt to the destruction of natural resources; the dismantling of military bases on or near indigenous peoples' lands; an end to the use of nuclear terror against indigenous peoples (for example, in the establishment of experimental nuclear health centers for indigenous peoples); reversal of the serious lack of legal protection and of legal recourse against nuclear development and the disposal of nuclear wastes; and a ban on nuclear testing on indigenous peoples' lands.

Throughout the South Pacific, indigenous peoples' lands have been taken away; in some cases, the people have even been killed or displaced in order to facilitate military operations of the Western countries. In other parts of the world, indigenous lands are being appropriated and exploited by the military-industrial complex for mineral resources to fuel the submarines, transport and dumping of nuclear wastes, establishment of military bases, and the militarzation of national societies.

Among the Commissions's proposals for action were public awareness programs, fact-finding missions and on-site investigations of areas affected by nuclear development, information dissemination, contacts with the UN Disarmament Center, and promotion of alternative energy resources for peaceful purposes only. Finally, the Commission urged the immediate halt of plans for the manufacture and deployment of the MX missile system on the Western Shoshone lands of Nevada, where Shoshone ownership is still in effect, and discourage its deployment on any other land, water or air base.

Copies of many of the documents presented at the UN NGO Conference are available through ARC for the costs of Photocopying (10 cents per page) and postage.

CORN HUSK DOLLS

HAND-MADE CORN HUSK DOLLS PERCHED ON A MUSHROOM SHELF

These dolls are authentically hand-made from white corn husks and are dressed in traditional attire. Each doll depicts in miniature the various phases of Iroquoian culture and customs.

These are collector's items as no two dolls are ever made exactly alike, each one is a one of a kind item. A wonderful gift idea.

Special order available also family groups of three by special order.

8 inch	$45.75
9 "	70.75
10 "	89.50
11 "	102.00
12 "	120.75

Send for our Products CATALOGUE $1

CLOSING STATEMENT OF HAUDENOSAUNEE DELEGATION TO THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS' CONFERENCE ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S LAND RIGHTS (September 15-18, 1981)

The Haudenosaunee delegation; on behalf of our chiefs, clan mothers, faithkeepers and people, wish to extend a hearty niawenha' (thank you) to the Non-Governmental Organizations for having brought together the conference on Indigenous People's Land Rights.

The conference will stand as an important step in the process of developing global understanding about the issues and concerns of the Indigenous nations and peoples. It is obvious that within the past four years the Indigenous nations and peoples have also grown and matured within their own understandings of their place within the global community. As these parallel growths continue, the much sought after solutions to the problems faced by Indigenous nations and peoples should become clearer and help to define the most appropriate paths toward the establishment of international law and principles pertinent to Indigenous nations and peoples.

We applaud the creation of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, and strongly urge it's full adoption by the Human Rights commission and the Economic and Social Council. We support the creation of the Working Group for several reasons, primary of these being that such an entity will provide Indigenous nations and peoples with a specialized and focused vehicle for presenting our issues and concerns to the world community.

It is our expressed concern to see that one particular principle be preserved throughout the formalization process for the institutionalization of the Working Group. That principle would be that delegations of Indigenous nations and peoples would be assured of direct access to the Working Group. It is obvious to us that member states of the United Nations will also have access in order to answer allegations relative to their relations with Indigenous nations and peoples, and hopefully, such exchanges would provide an avenue for dialogue between the concerned parties.

If there is any complaint that we would raise concerning the conference, it would be that the fullest possible availability for Indigenous delegations to speak wasn't clearly designed into the conference proceedings. Particularly in the context of regional representations, we felt that the broadest possible inviting of Indigenous delegations came up short. We are clear that the questions and issues of Indigenous nations and peoples is a global matter - that there is hardly an area of the world where Indigenous nations and peoples are not experiencing some form of oppression. This spectrum of issues and concerns was not fully represented, in fact, whole areas of the world that are undergoing these conditions were not represented. We feel that through diligent work these representational problems can be overcome in future conferences.

To help further the ongoing work we wish to offer the following recommendations:

A. The Emergency Response International Network (E.R.I.N.) - this is the network organized under the auspices of AKWESASNE NOTES, and Indigenous people's international newspaper. The primary tool of this network is the "Phone Tree" - an international organizing of people; organizations; and other entities supportive of Indigenous nations' and peoples' struggles. We would recommend that NGO's desirous of contributing their organizational capabilities to this network contact:

E.R.I.N.
c/o AKWESASNE NOTES
Mohawk Nations
via: Rooseveltown, NY 13683

B. The establishment of a crisis contact center amongst the NGO community in Geneva. Problems being faced by Indigenous nations and peoples often become a full blown crisis very quickly and involve many people on a large scale. At those moments the crisis point often needs the external pressure and support of many elements to prevent violence and loss of life.

C. The formation of fact finding missions composed of NGO representatives to visit, upon invitation by Indigenous nations and peoples, areas of crisis or potential conflict. One important role such visits could play would be as a mediating influence on the situation; another would be as impartial reporters on the facts concerned with a particular issue.

D. The full support of the NGO community for the formal passage of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples within the UN framework.

E. That future conferences focusing on the issues and concerns of Indigenous nations and peoples be structured to insure that primary representation of these issues by made by Indigenous delegations, and, that the participation of state bureaucracies concerned with the administration of "Indigenous affairs" be restricted to a responsive role in relation to specific allegations or charges raised during such conferences.

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT of INDIAN RIGHTS

At a time when the United States Supreme Court is disassembling the few legal doctrines which had provided Indian nations with some protection for land and self-determination rights, it is becoming increasingly necessary to take cases directly to the United Nations. As United States courts, the Congress and the President threaten, subvert or ignore Indian rights, the United Nations is taking steps to increase protection for the human rights and fundamental freedom of indigenous peoples. This summer, in Geneva Switzerland, from August 17 to September 18, several important events took place within the United Nations.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities lent an attentive ear to statements made to it by representatives of three indigenous peoples organizations which are formally in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. After the Sub-Commisson met, the United Nations hosted a conference on indigenous people and their land, which was attended by several hundred people.

The most important victory which Indians achieved in Geneva was that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities passed a resolution in favor of the establishment of a special U.N. Working Group to focus on the human rights of indigenous populations. Such a working group has been sought by Indians ever since the 1977 Conference on Indians in the Americas also held at the United Nations in Geneva. The Working Group, if finally approved by the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council, will be a vehicle for focusing greater United Nations attention on the rights of Indians and other indigenous peoples.

The working group would be composed of five human rights experts from Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern Europe and Western Europe. It would meet for up to five days prior to the annual meeting of the Human rights Sub-Commission in order to review developments in regard to the human rights of indigenous people. The working group also would be responsible for developing an international covenant, that is, international standards for the promotion and protection of the human rights of indigenous peoples.

The need for such a working group is clear. Throughout the Western Hemisphere, the laws of national governments discriminate against and do not recognize the rights of Indian nations to land and self-determination. Frequently, when land is illegally taken from Indian communities, the Indians are not even allowed an opportunity to be hear in court to defend their rights. If a case is allowed into court, most likely it will be resolved according to the racially discriminatory, outmoded and discredited principles upon which colonial empires were built in the 18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries.

The lack of availability and racism of local courts makes the United Nations one of the few places to which Indians can turn to protect their rights. The need for the working group and the racism in Indian law were analyzed in written statements made by the Indian Law Resource Center to the U.N. Human Rights Sub-Commission (U.N. documents E/CN.4/Sub.2/NGO.89 and E/CN.4/Sub.2/NGO.98).

The idea of establishing the working group received a big boost from Theo Van Boven, Director of the U.N. Human Rights Division, in his opening address to the Human Rights Sub-Commission. In concluding a lengthy statement on the situation of indigenous peoples, Mr. Van Boven called for U.N. action as follows:

It has become clear, first of all, that there is need for further standard-setting regarding the human rights of indigenous peoples. It has also become clear that indigenous peoples need an appropriate forum within the United Nations to which they can address themselves on a regular basis and which may give regular consideration to their problems. Thirdly, it has also become clear that there is need within the United Nations for an on-going system of fact-finding into problems affecting the enjoyment of human rights by indigenous peoples.

Mr. Van Boven's opening address set the stage for a strong lobbying effort by representatives of Indian Groups and their allies. After drafting and redrafting a resolution which would establish the working group, an initial sponsor was found who could push the idea of the working group. This was Asbjorn Eide,the Sub-Commission member from Norway. In less than two weeks, 13 of the 26 members of the Sub-Commission joined in sponsoring the resolution, including the members from Belgium, United States, Bangladesh, Peru, Ghana, France, India, Zambia, Sudan, Costa Rica, Yugoslavia, United Kingdom, and Ethiopia. The members of the Sub-Commission sit not as representatives of their governments but as independent experts in the field of human rights. The resolution requesting the working group was passed without a vote, which means there was no strong opposition, and a large majority of the Sub-Commission supported it. Because the working group would require additional funding by the United Nations it must be approved by the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council. The Indian Law Resource Center, which has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, was one of the groups which took part in the meeting of the Sub-Commission, participated in drafting the resolution, and lobbied to get it passed.

Several speakers communicated to the Human Rights Sub-Commission about specific cases of violations of the human rights of Indian communities. The United States plan to forcibly remove over 9,000 traditional Navajo people from Big Mountain came up four times. Two speakers criticized the forced removal plan and the United States rose twice to defend itself. The Sub-commission heard that traditional Navajo and Hopi people regard Big Mountain as Holy Land, as a spiritual enclave. A speaker informed the Sub-Commission of the threats and the manipulation used to remove the Navajo people, including the livestock reduction program, which is depriving the people of their means of subsistance. The United States program to remove Navajos from Big Mountain violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights the Convention on the Elimination of Race Discrimination, and several other human rights conventions.

The United States made a detailed defense, attempting to convince the Sub-Commission that it wasn't violating international law. According to the official representative of the United States, the Hopi people and the Navajo people could not get along with each other, so the United States had to move the Navajos. The United States did not, however, deny that the relocation program was already causing horrible suffering for the people of Big Mountain.

The week following the four week meeting of the Human Rights Sub-Commission, there was a United Nations Conference on Indigenous Peoples and Their Land, from September 15-18, (1981). One hundred and thirty indigenous delegates, 72 non-governmental organizations delegates and 94 support group members attended. The conference among other things, strongly endorsed the idea of establishing a working group on indigenous populations. The conference also concluded that the Draft Declaration of Principles for the Defense of the Indigenous Nations and Peoples of the Western Hemisphere, formulated at the 1977 U.N. Conference on Indians in the Americas, should serve as the basis for an International Covenant on the rights of indigenous peoples. Other recommendations were that the U.N. should sponsor an international year of indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples should have increased access to international organizations, and the the U.N. should provide on-the-scene surveillance of human rights violations.

(from the Indian Law Resource Center)

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Thirty-fourth session
E/Cn.4/Sub.2/NGO/98

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID IN ALL COUNTRIES,WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XL-VIII)

Written statement submitted by the Indian Law Resource Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status Roster

INTRODUCTION

Many countries continue sytematicaliy to adopt practices which grossly violate the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. Among the worst of these practices is institutionalized racial discrimination against indigenous peoples.

RACISM AGAINST INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Racism and racial discrimination against indigenous peoples is today still embodied in the law and legal systems of many countries of the Americas. This information comes to the attention of the Indian Law Resource Center because we represent or give legal assistance to indigenous peoples in South, Central and North America and because we have conducted legal and factual research into this question.

Race discrimination in the law of any country is recognized as an especially grave breach of human rights because it gives public governmental sanction to discrimination which is therefore institutionalized and on-going. In this respect, the law affecting indigenous populations in the Americas is like the more familiar abomination, apartheid.

With certain notable exceptions, such as the study now nearing completion on the treatment of indigenous peoples, almost no attention has been given to the problems of discrimination against indigenous populations. Because of severe poverty, isolation, political repression and other reasons, indigenous peoples have not until recently been able to bring these problems to the attention of this body and the Commission on Human Rights. Therefore it should be no surprise that we now find widespread, institutionalized and governmentally sanctioned race discrimination against indigenous populations. Many delegations of indigenous people are planning to attend the Conference on Indigenous People and the Land, in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15 to 18 September 1981, in order to attest to and document these facts.

Race discrimination in the law affecting indigenous peoples has three principal elements which are found in the law of almost every American country having an indigenous population.

1. The treatment of indigenous peoples as wards, incompetents or beneficiaries of a supposed trust.

Under the law of many countries indigenous peoples are said to be the permanent wards of the Government or it is said that they are the beneficiaries of a trust, with the dominant Governmet as trustee.

This "trusteeship" is imposed, so far as we are aware, on only one racial group: indigenous peoples.

Such trusteeships have their origin in colonial practices of the past century when they were used to mask the exploitation of colonized people. These trusteeships, then as now, are not true trusts but impositions upon unwilling peoples. The trust usually cannot be legally enforced and the "trustee" is accountable to no one.

The assertion of such a "trust" relationship not only deprives indigenous peoples of their full legal capacity, but also serves as a pretext for broad authority over them. The paternalistic and abusive nature of such a sham trust is but a part of the over-all pattern of institutionalized race discrimination practised against indigenous peoples.

2. The denial of legal or juridical identity to some or all indigenous entities.

The human rights of greatest importance to indigenous peoples in the Americas are largely rights which exist only as community or group rights, such as the right to maintain their religious and cultural ways. This includes the right to own and use property and natural resources which are almost without exceptions rights held in common by indigenous peoples or communities. Purely private ownership of land is very rare, in general indigenous people own their land in common. As a result, legal protection of fundamental indigenous rights requires that indigenous groups have juridical identity or legal existance. Virtualiy every country we have examined in the Americas claims the unqualified right to deny to or to terminate the juridical identity of any or all indigenous entities. In some countries all indigenous entities are denied juridical existence. This limitless and devastating legal authority aplies only to indigenous peoples. It is a special and fundamental legal disability or liability affecting one racial group like no other, and it is one of the keystones of the institutionalized race discrimination against indigenous peoples.

3. The denial of legal protection or recognition of indigenous property rights on the same basis as other races.

The dominant Governments in the western hemisphere frequently deny that indigenous peoples own the land on which they live. Indigenous people who have lived on land for generations, or since time immemorial are regarded under the law of most American governments as having nothing more than possessory rights. Indian land rights are sometimes termed "aboriginal title" or "Indian title", but not absolute ownership or title. Because it is denied that Indian tribes, nations and communites actually own their ancestral lands, they often are not allowed to protect their land rights in court. In a number of American countries indigenous peoples, because of their race, receive almost no legal protection for their lands. Indian land can be taken without paying compensation, without notice of intent to take, without the opportunity to be heard as to the taking, and for any purpose, including the private profit of non-Indian individuals and corporations.

Everywhere in the western hemisphere, indigenous people are denied the right to own, use and retain their property, through the operation of laws and policies which apply to them solely because of their race.

Land is essential to the cultural, political, and economic survival of indigenous peoples. To most indigenous peoples, land has central spiritual and religious significance. Without land, self-sufficient people lose their capacity to provide for themselves. The racist denial of land rights is part of a process which, if left unchecked, could destroy many of the indigenous peoples.

EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION

The effects of this discrimination are extremely severe, in some instances leading to the virtual extinction of certain populations. This occurs because of the lack of legal protection and the resulting inability to defend themselves against expropriation of their lands, forced relocations, diseases brought by intruding non-Indians, and destruction of the fish, game and habitat necessary for their way of life.

In some countries literally thousands of indigenous people or people of indigenous heritage have been killed, quite often because of efforts to retain or regain control of their native lands. Not long ago an Indian lawyer in a Central American country, whom we have been proud to assist, and who was working to protect indigenous land rights, was assassinated there along with his young son. Countless tales of horror and repression could be told, all related to this basic fact: institutionalized race discrimination exist against indigenous people in the legal systems of most countries in the Americas.

Where there exists legally sanctioned race discrimination, no rights of the affected class can be secure. Because indigenous people can be and are threatened with such serious violations of fundamental rights, they cannot, practically speaking, defend themselves or protect other rights, even those that are nominally protected by the law. Where the very existence of a community may be destroyed and its lands expropriated with Government sanction, the threat of such action has the effect of nullifying every other right. How can there be freedom of religion, for example, if the dominant Government is free to supress that religion with the threat of expropriation of lands?

It is well understood, particularly in relation to South Africa, that the existence of legally sanctioned race discrimination debases civilization itself and destroyed the moral and civil authority which is the foundation of law. This Sub-Commission must not turn away from this serious problem but must give close attention and study to it. This body must not accept blindly or uncritically the elaborate rationalizations of governments which wish to be excused. Of course, every Government which in fact exercises the right to expropriate indigenous lands discriminatorily and without due process of law or compensation will plead excuses and try to show it treats indigenous people well. But none can deny the existence of overtly discriminatory laws and legal doctrines. This body must not cease its scrutiny of this matter until all such laws are expressly done away with.

AKWESASNE NOTES/AUTUMN 1981/PAGE 22

INDIAN CLAIMS COMMISSION CASES THREATEN INDIAN LAND RIGHTS

In two statements of legal position which were quietly issued this summer by the top lawyers for Indian affairs in the Departments of Justice and Interior, the United States government has finally admitted that many Indian land claims are severely threatened by cases brought in the Indian Claims commission and the Court of Claims.

For decades, Indians, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Indian claims lawyers have debated the question whether money damages claims brought under the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946 would undermine claims for return of Indian lands. Many Indian communities have been sharply divided over this question. Despite countless assurances by BIA officials and claims lawyers that these Indian Claims Commission cases would have no damaging legal impact on Indian rights to land, many Indians have resisted the pressure to have their historic claims submitted to the Commission or to the Court of Claims. (The Court of Claims has taken over the Commission's work.) The Indians resistng these Commission cases have feared that the payment of money damages would be considered a sale or surrender of Indian land rights which are far more valuable and, in many cases, sacred to the Indian people from whom the disputed land was unlawfully taken in the first place.

The claims attorneys have had a strong financial interest in having the Indian Claims Commission cases brought and carried to judgment, because by federal law the claims lawyers are entitled to about 10 percent of the final cash award. The confict of interest for the claims lawyers involved in some of these Indian Claims Commission cases was recently explained by a dissenting Court of Claims judge in a case involving the Santa Domingo Pueblo: "The attorney's interest, but not the tribe's, is to effect a judicial sale, as it were, of tribal land at values of some historic past date, not of the present, to be set by the Commission, whether or not the Indians may in reality ever have had their title extinguished except by the Indian Claims Commisson proceeding itself." By successfully making the case that Indian land title was already completely extinguished by the United States government, a number of these claims lawyers have become multi-millionaires. The fact is that many of their clients would have preferred, if given the choice, to forego the money and to argue instead that their Indian title had never been extinguished and that the lands must therefore be returned to Indian possession.

The new Interior and Justice Department statements of position on the legal effect of these Indian Claims Commission cases show that the choice is indeed between land or money. These statments by the Solicitor of the Interior and by the Assistant Attorney General for Land and Natural Resources confirm the worst fears of those Indians who have resisted involvement by their nations and tribes in the Indian Claims Commission cases. The government's top Indian affairs lawyers now say that as far as the United States government is concerned the Indian Claims Commission cases extinguish -- completely wipe out -- any practical possbility of Indian recovery of lands which were the subject of the Commission cases. The judgments and paymet of awards of the Commission and the Court of Claims are said to lay completely to rest all related land claims against the United States government, and possibly all related claims against private individuals as well.

"...as long as the grass grows, and the waters flow...."

In summary form the questions and answers in the Interior and Justice Department statements are as follows:

Q: Does payment of the award money effectively extinguish Indian title to the land or ratify a prior extinguishment of Indian title?

A: Yes, insofar as claims of title against the United States are concerned. It is not clear yet whether a money award in an Indian Claims Commission case would bar an Indian land claim against a third party, but that may be decided in the Oneida claims litigation which is now in federal court.

Q: The findngs and judgment in the Indian Claims Commission cases typically show that Indian title to massive areas of land has been extinguished by the United States. Will these findngs and judgment be used against Indians if they bring new federal court cases to try and recover some or all of the same land?

A: Yes, and the United States has already been successful in using that argument against the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation who brought a quiet title action against the United States to recover lands which were unlawfully seized in violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty. (That case is now on its way to the Supreme Court, a not very promising forum for Indian rights these days.)

Q: Would the United States government use its legal resources to bring a lawsuit to help Indians recover lands which were the subject of an Indian Claims Commission judgment and award?

A: No. Accordng to the Solicitor of the Interior Department: "No federal trust responsibility remains with regard to a tribal claim to such land."

Q: Would the Interior and Justice Departments support special legislation authorizing the Indian nation or tribe to bring a new lawsuit against the United States for return of land notwithstanding the Indian Claims Commission judgment and award?

A: No. The Assistant Attorney General for Land and Natural Resources said: "The Department of Justice would strongly oppose any proposed legislation waiving sovereign immunity and authorizing suit for return of the same land to the Indian people."

(For a copy of the complete text of the questions and answers made in the statements of the Solicitor of the Interior, William H. Coldiron, and Assistant Attorney General Carol E. Dinkin, write the Indian Law Resource Center 601 E Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.)

For many Indian nations and tribes, the legal damage described in these answers has already occurred. Their cases have gone to judgment and the awards have been paid. If those Indians wish to pursue their legal claims for return of lands, they and their lawyers now face the awesome task of overcoming what amounts to a final United States legal determination of extinguishment.

But for a number of other Indian nations and tribes there is an opportunity to try to avoid the extinguishment effect of the Indian Claims Commission cases because their cases are not yet finally concluded and the award money has not yet been paid. Thus, Indian resistance to the Commission cases and to payment of the claims awards may still be fruitful among the Hopi, Seminoles, Western Shoshones, Sioux, Six Nations and other Indian nations and tribes where resistance has been strong.

Those Indians resisting the Indian Claims Commission approach to final settlement of Indian land claims have now been vindicated because they correctly anticipated the extinguishment position which the United States government is openly taking today. Those Indians and others who are fighting to preserve and provide a viable land base for their people still have a chance to reject the government's offer to exchange cash for Indian land rights. And, now that the Indian Claims Commission Act's threat of extinguishment is finally being candidly admitted by the government, those Indians who have previously supported the Indian Claims Commission cases because they were misled or confused by BIA officials and claims lawyers, may also decide it is in the best interest of their Indian people to join that resistance. Regardless of past events it is now clear that all Indians concerned about protecting the homelands of their nations and tribes should take a fresh, close look at the legal status of their claims.

September, 1981

from the Indian Law Resource Center, Washington, DC)

MESSAGE TO THE INDIANS IN GUATEMALA

Greetings to all native people in Guatamala. Greetings to the Chiefs, Clanmothers, Medicine people, Faithkeepers, women, men and children. Greetings from the Elders Council, and Indian Nations in the north.

We have heard about your trouble and we are concerned for ... well-being. We know there is a great struggle for people's minds taking place in your country. We see that your lands are taken away, we see the people are being arrested without warrant, that they are imprisoned, tortured and killed. We know about this because our people in the north have suffered the same way, from the same oppressor, for the same reason - Indian land.

We urge you to hold your lands, we urge you to keep your spiritual ways, we urge you to keep your ceremonies. We urge you to keep your language and not let the schools take your children, and teach them foreign ways. We urge you to protect your chiefs and women. This way you will survive. We know you have a great culture and history, great traditions of weaving and art. You are a proud people and we urge you to continue.

We know you are oppressed by a military dictatorship that allows a death squad to rape and murder your people. We know that you are suffering and we share your suffering. We know that the military dictatorship is supported by dollars allocated by the Congress of the United States. The present administration has stated that human rights will no longer be it's policy, and that it will support dictatorships regardless of their murderus policies. We are gravely concerned with the overbalance of military in the adminstration of the United States. The emphasis is on war and military hardware.

When warriors lead a nation, then you will have war.

The elders are concerned that in our continent the American people are being prepared for war.

The elders are concerned that religion is being used on our continent as a tool to dictate a moral direction to war. We recognize this because we have been oppressed by the same tool.

We say to you, hold to the spiritual ways of our Grandfathers and stand where we have always stood, in the spiritual center of our lands. We are not with the spiritually bankrupt capitalist, nor are we part of an ideological left that has eliminated spirituality from its doctrine. We stand in the spiritual center of this great turtle island and we carry no flags but our own.

We demand that these foreign powers on our lands respect the Indian Nations, our cultures and our people. We who hold these lands for the Great Spirit.

The Elders Circle and their Runners, see the world moving in the direction of war that will be the most destructive catastrophy in the memory of people. We see the youth of Nations on a destructive rampage without direction and with no respect to parents or elders because parents and elders have nothing to teach, and have turned this work to institutions with no hearts.

We have leaders in control of powerful nations who's only ethic is economics. Our Mother the Earth is undergoing tremendous abuse and exploitation, under the guise of progress.

We call on all peoples from the Four Directions of this earth to join hands and return to the spiritual ways of respect, love and peace.

Daw Nay Toh,
Elders circle
The 6th Annual Meeting of the Traditional Elders Circle
Onondaga Nation
via: Nedrow, New York 11120

September 3, 1981

Dear People,

I am an American who lived in Guatemala for 2 1/2 years with Indian families (1972-'75 & summer '79). I would like to share with you a translation of an excerpt from a letter I received on August 15th from one of the Indian women that I lived with for more than a year. She is a weaver who is trying to put her only son (17 years old) through school.

"...I'm fighting for him, but more than anything, I'm filled with grief, because they're killing young people, minors. Sometimes they simply make a mistake with the names - I'm filled with sorrow because two friends of my son have aready been killed this way. Because of that I don't think he should come home to Comalapa during his vacation & I'm looking for work for him outside of the village. I have alot of work at home but, I'm too afraid to have him assist me here, because people are being killed continuously. He's my only child, I love him very much & want him to be able to find work in the future, but God only knows if our lives will be spared. We're in constant fear every night & each time we leave & enter the village..."

Over a hundred people from my friend's village (men, women, & children) have been murdered by Guate security forces & death squads. Other villages have been totally wiped out.

I recently wrote to my congressman, Matt McHugh, who was very supportive & shares my fears that the Reagan administration will want to send military aid to Guate in the near future. He encouraged me in his letter to do whatever I could to inform people about the disasterous situation in that country (over 4,000 people in Guate were assasinated by the government in 1980). Perhaps you could once again urge readers of your mailing list & phone tree to write their representatives, Reagan & Haig against sending military aid to Guate & to support the Guate Resolution HR 101 arms embargo.

Thank you,

Sincerely,
Susan Epstein

Big Mountain

THE WOMEN WHO FIGHT

An Interview

On Monday, August 24, 1981, sixty-two year old Alice Benally was arrested at her home at Big Mountain. She was taken to the Keams Canyon jail. She was bonded and released that same day. Bond money was provided by the Tribal Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute Commission office in Window Rock (Arizona).

The basis for Alice Benallys' arrest is the warrant issued on April 4, 1981 by order of Edwin Lawrence, Joint Use Area court judge. At that time, Alice and her three daughters - Sally Tsosie, Louise Benally, and Marlene - were to have been tried on charges stemming from the September 1980 incident in which the four women peacefully confronted the police who were guarding the Joint Use Area (JUA) fencing crew which was attempting to erect the fence at Big Mountain. The four women were arrested and charged with obstructing a police officer, assault and battery, destruction of federal property, and resisting arrest.

The women were brought to trial on these charges on Jan. 9, 1981, ad this ended in a mistrial. A new trial date was set for April 4, 1981. Judge Lawrence moved the trial from Pinon to Keams Canyon. Taking the position that this constituted an illegal proceeding, the women did not appear for trial. Judge Lawrence then charged them with contempt of court and issued arrest warrants for the four women.

However, efforts had not been made to serve the warrants until Aug. 24th. The women had tried to surrender last April and at that time the government wasn't interested in having them come in to surrender. Sally tried to surrender in August and could not find anyone to accept her.

An arraignment of Alice Benally on the contempt charges took place Sept. 26, 1981. The trial was scheduled on the charges from Sept. 1980 but the original charges were dismissed because the court did not have sufficient jurors and the prosecutor didn't appear until well over an hour after the time scheduled for the trial. This means that Alice Benally has been cleared of all charges except the contempt charge. A hearing is scheduled for Oct. 17th on the contempt charge.

Her three daughters will still be tried on all the charges plus the contempt charge. A trial date of Dec. 28 or 29 has been set for 16 year-old Marlene, Sally and Louise are still without trial dates.

(Our thanks to the Albuquerque Big Mountain Support Group and to Micheal Stuhff, attorney for the Benallys for the above information.)

(Editor's Note: The early summer issue of AKWESASNE NOTES, Vol. 13, No.2, carried the story: RESISTANCE AT BIG MOUNTAIN - 8,000 NAVAJO TO BE FORCIBLY UPROOTED, which is a story that most of the world still does not know about. Attorney for the Benallys, Micheal Stuhff says: "I think it's a real tragedy. The land dispute which is really a dispute between the very traditional people and the federal government degenerated to this situation that people are having to be moved against their will. What its doing is creating new 'welfare ghettos'. It is one of the great tragedys of the twentieth century in Americas dealings with Native Peoples."

In this article we would like to share with our readers two interviews with Alice Benally's daughters. Native women have been forced to become "activists" because they must protect their people, their culture and their land. Protecting their Way of Life brings about a form of protest that people frown upon - but it is real, so very real, to Native People and it must be done. All over Indian country the women are taking hold of the issues and leading the resistance - not by having tea parties or seeking federal funding, but by openly confronting the oppressor.

(For an excellent series on Native women who are active on many levels ranging from political organizing, to healing, see the Sept. 1981 issue of NATIVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY which is published by the Tribal Sovereignty Program, Box 10, Forestville California 95436, (707) 887-1559. We highly recommend this publication.)

When asked to describe Alice Benally, Attorney Stuhff said: "She's a real nice lady. Certainly not the kind that you would expect to find terrorizing police officers. She must weigh about 90 pounds. She's in her 60's, very traditional, a hard-working lady. She doesn't speak English. Understandably (she) is very, very upset and confused about the law and the effect this law has on her. She has a very large family - a truly extended family.")

****

The following interview was with Lavina John, one of Alice Benallys' daughters:

Carol Cornelius Mohawk for AKWESASNE NOTES: Who is involved in supporting your mother during this struggle?

LAVINA JOHN: Our whole family is involved because it's our mother and three sisters.

AN: Could I speak with Alice? Does she speak English?

LJ: No, she doesn't speak English. You could talk with her with an interpretor, but that is difficult on the telephone.

AN: How long has your family lived in what is called the Joint Use Area?

LJ: Ever since we were born. My mother and father were born here and married here. My grandmother and great-

grandmother lived here.

AN: Is the Benally family home in the area of people scheduled to be relocated?

LJ: Yes – and it is really hard on the family. My mother lost three sons – one six years ago and two just recently. We buried them right here. At first my mother got angry, but later she felt weak after the recent loss of two sons.

AN: How close does the fencing of the JUA come to the Benally home?

LJ: The fence is one mile south of where we live and on the east side it is one mile.

AN: What is the situation with the recently proposed plan by Senator Goldwater to exchange land?

LJ: We are negotiating with the Hopi Tribal Council. We are trying to work out some way to settle this. The plan is to exchange 32 square miles of land. It is mosty what you call desert, sage. The Big Mountain people and the Hopi Tribal Council agree but the Navajo Tribal Council says no.

We've been fighting a long time, we are tired, we don't know where to turn. The people want to stay on the land.

AN: If this plan is agreed upon would it mean your family could stay on your homeland?

LJ: Yes. Goldwater is pushing for this land exchange. We want the Big Mountain People to stay here. It's a fight here. We say – LEAVE BIG MOUNTAIN ALONE!

DNA Newsletter

Interview with Alice Benallys' daughter, Mae:

AN: Can you tell me about your mother and sisters involvement in fighting the fencing crews?

MAE: Well, right now I would say my sisters and mother are political prisoners. They all feel that way and thats what they say. They only stood up for some of the things that they believe in – strongly believe in, the principles – and then they get thrown in jail for it. It doesn't really make a whole lot of sense what their trying to do to them.

AN: Can you talk about your mother, did you expect that she would actually go out and confront the police and the fencing crew?

MAE: There was quite a bit of pressure building up – they were putting up the fence every other mile. The fencing material alone was very costly not includng the labor so you can imagine the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was going totally out and pouring all the money into the idea of fencing up every acre of the Navajo Nation. Alot of the people do not like this idea, so they oppose it. The way they feel about it is that it is a iron curtain – this fence.

AN: The fence is to surround only the JUA?

MAE: Yes, but it's not only one fence that goes around the area that they want. It is going around the area they want, and then it is going all the way across, across all the area the other way again, so it's just like, how would you describe it, a checker. You see fence every other mile, the whole reservation, seems like, within the whole JUA. They are constantly putting fence up, putting fence up. Everywhere you look you see barb wire.

AN: It must be hard to drive through your homeland and see fence everywhere.

MAE: They have really blocked off alot of areas where we have our livestock. They have access to different wells where they could get water. The same way with people you know. The could get to a different area without ever thinking about there was a fence and that they shouldn't go over that fence. It's so hard on alot of our elderly people to understand that. Recently, two years ago Senator DeConcini of Arizona came up with this idea that they should leave the elderly people on the reservation until they die. However they should move all their children and grandchildren off the land and leave them behind – but who's going to take care of them? This to me again is like East and West Berlin where you practically have to crawl over the fence to see your Grandmother, Grandfather. Alot of the elderly people couldn't handle it. The Indian Health Service in Tuba City did a study that showed alot of the elderly have died because of stress and the plain undertainity of their lives.

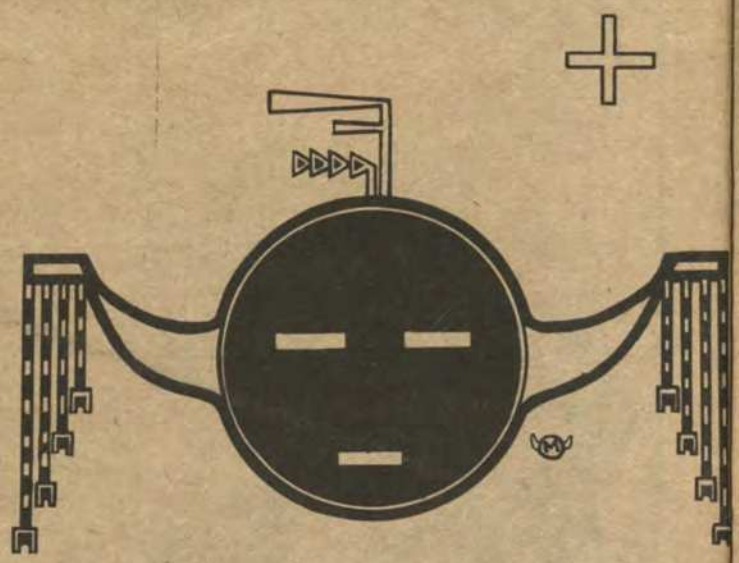
I did research with the University of New Mexico. We interviewed the grass-roots people, and nobody is really in favor of relocation, except maybe some tribal officials but they sold out a long time ago, maybe ten-fifteen years ago. They didn't really know what the impact would be but they went ahead and signed their life away without really knowing what was going on.

AN: Is the purpose for this land deal (relocation) to obtain the minerals underneath the land for the corporations?

MAE: Yes. The big corporations has a big part in it. There is a big coal mine that's going on right now on the reservation and I understand more and more of it will be happening as far as drilling for oil, gasoline, kerosene and uranium.

AN: Will that happen right on Big Mountain?

MAE: Big Mountain, part of it is being mined. There is a coal mine there, it's already happening for the last ten years. I really feel that the big corporations are behind the whole thing and they just want to get rid of the Indians – the Indians are just in the way, there's no feeling for them.



The relocaton itself is really a disgrace to the people. And it has caused alot of misery on the part of the people, especially those who have been relocated. I have many of my relative that have been relocated. The impact study was not done until after everything started happening. It's typical of the BIA to work that way. They get into alot of hot water and then the say, wait a minute – let's do a study. They don't even do an adequate study either.

AN: The problem with the issue is that this is one of the biggest cases of genocide of this century and most of the world doesn't know about it.

MAE: Well, alot of our people have been to the Geneva conference and tried to tell the world that the first americans are being wiped out so they won't be in the way anymore. My sister went to the Geneva conference that was just taking place in Sept. (1981). I haven't seen her and I don't know where she is now. She's treated like a fugitive. If they get ahold of her they'll probably throw her in jail.

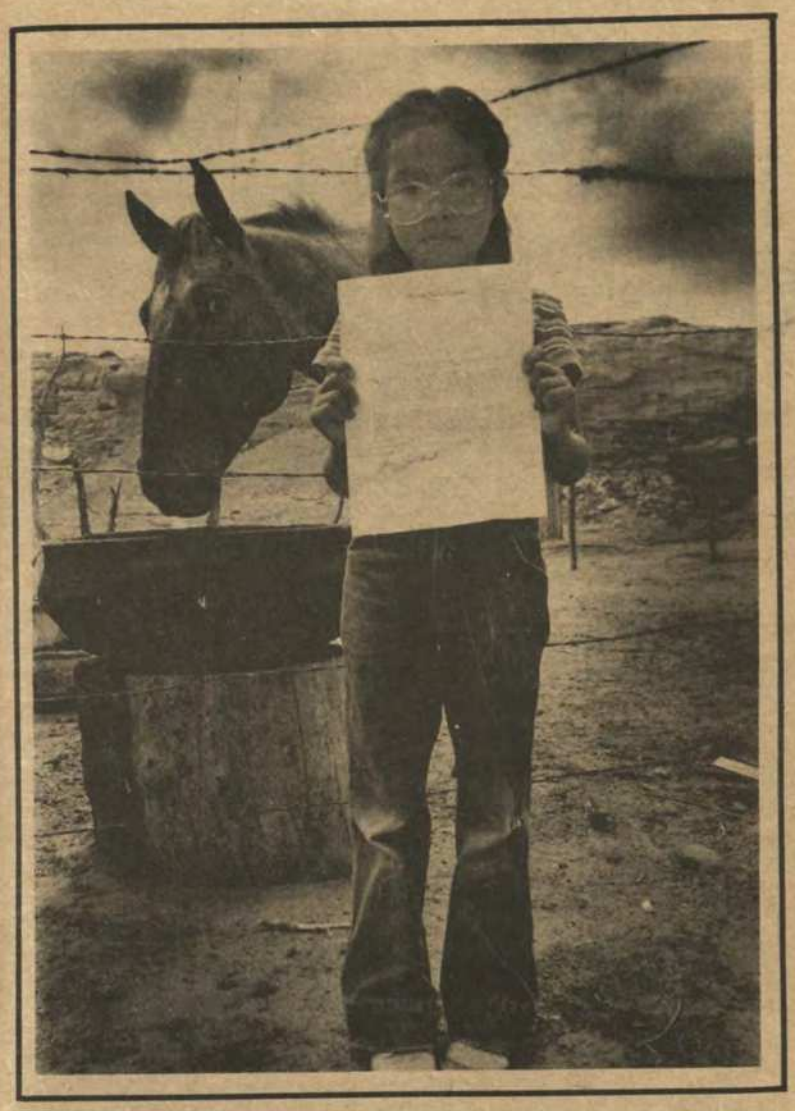
AN: This is one of your three sisters who have warrants out on them?

MAE: Yes, and Marlene was not quite sixteen when all this happened and they threw her in jail like an adult and tried to treat her like an adult. I think they should have a juvenile court trial instead of treating her like an adult.

AN: Could you describe your family, your mother, more in terms of how they live and how this relocation and fencing has affected them?

MAE: For a long time we were told that everytime we wanted to improve our hogan, or house that we live in, most of them are just – you might say not even fit to live in, some of them are ready to fall in. They don't want us to build anymore new houses. If you do try to build a new house or try to improve your house or improve anything around your home, naturally you will get picked up by the "feds" and get sent down to Tuscon to be tried and fined.

They try to tell us that if you relocate you will "live it up". But you get a substandard house. The real estate people are getting fat and happy. The elderly don't know about property tax and utilities. These are things they don't know how to handle. The lifestyle is so different.



Juanita Tso from Dinnebito receives letter from Barry Goldwater, June '81

Alice Benally cooking at Big Mountain Gathering, April, 1981.

Photo by Pamela Giger

AN: What do you think about this new plan that Goldwater is proposing?

MAE: I really don't think people, especially in the Big Mountain area are going to go along with it. I don't know what kind of man he is talking to that they try to purchase land for the people who have to be moved. Recently they had a Senate hearing where he said he had spoke to my great-grandpa who has been gone the last ten years. He said he claims to know the Navajo people in and out, the same with the Hopi's but he doesn't know a damn thing about us. But that is what he's claiming. All those people in Washington, DC, listen to him and he doesn't know us. He claims to have talked to people. I don't know what kind of person he is.

AN: Is your family affected by the livestock reduction plan?

MAE: Yes, my family, all their lives they have - I remember back in the early part of the 1960's, also the latter part of the 50's, maybe 1958 or 59 - I became aware that something was happening. My Grandfather, I remember, had about 3,000 heads of cattle and we had 600-700 heads of sheep, and goats. That was, by our standards, pretty well off. The people generally make a living off of their livestock, you sell them. You shear them in the spring and you sell the wool and that holds you over through the summer. Then we sell the lambs in the fall and that holds you over through the winter. As I recall during my childhood, you never hardly went to the trading post - maybe once a month and only for the necessities; like kerosene or maybe a sack of flour. Other than that you plant your own corn, beans, squash, foods like that which are very essential for people to live - food for day to day. But this is not so anymore.

In the 1960's I became aware that they have so many government programs which is pulling the wool over your eyes. They just said here's a government check that you could get every month and you don't really have to have to depend on livestock. They gave the people the idea they would take of care of them forever but that isn't so. Alot of people went ahead and threw away their livestock with very little knowledge.

On the other hand they were told that the reason they had to get rid of their livestock was to rejuvenate the land. As I recall, as many livestock as we had there was always alot of grass and plenty of rain. But I remember back in the 60's there was some kind of a chemical that I'm sure they used to spray it by plane, but we didn't know it. It (chemical) looked like icicles and it was laying around all over the place. These chemicals are the one who killed the vegetation. It literally burned it out. Then they say you have too many livestock therefore the land can not hold up anymore. But I know they have the other things (chemicals) to make it look like it was the livestock. It wasn't true.

AN: Do you know who did the chemical spraying and what the chemical is?

MAE: Probably the BIA, the government. I remember there used to be planes flying all over the place.

AN: This was back in the 60's

MAE: Yes, right around there, about 1967, 68.

AN: Has anyone investigated to find out what the chemical was?

MAE: No, but now people are starting to say, remember that time when all these chemicals were all over the place and it practically burned out all the vegetation. Now we became aware of it. Maybe they done it during the time at night. I remember there were endless planes.

AN: Did you see any changes in the peoples health at that time?

MAE: At that time people were alot more self-sufficient and they were alot happier. But not anymore. Alot of them turned to alcohol and what have you. Alot of them, plainly, died.

AN: That's the way it is on all the reservations since they brought those government programs in. It destroyed the people and destroyed their self-sufficiency. Now we have to really fight to get that back. So many of the people don't want it anymore, the generation born after that time doesn't even understand what government programing is about and thats the real genocide of peoples.

MAE: Yes, I agree.

New Era Looms In Economic Relations

The Reagan administration is erasing the economic priorities which have dominated U.S. policies for nearly fifty years and Indian communities are among the victims of the new policies. The new policies represent a planned shift of wealth, administered by the government, which greatly favors the interests of the rich (and moreso the super rich) over the interests of the poor. It is a shift in priorities which promises to seriously effect the Indian communities, and it spells disaster for many communities. Massive federal budget cuts are slated for Indian programs, communities, and federal programs upon which Indian communities have relied for more than a decade. Although the Republican program is itself confused and unsteady and almost certainly faces challenges from liberals in the future, the long-range prospects for Indian peoples is, at best, uncertain.

Indian peoples have long been innocent and unknowing victims of U.S. government policies. They have been mystified and manipulated by government policies since colonial times. Those policies included Indian enslavement under feudal systems, Indian extermination under merchantile systems, and have forced Indian people into agricultural and artisan roles under expansionism. It is the fate of the oppressed that they are not only victims of manipulation, but that they are mystified by the nature of that manipulation, and often become willing (if unknowing) participants in plans which are designed for their own exploitation and destruction.

The latest chapter in this story began in the early 1960s during the Kennedy Administration. At that time, a conscious decision was made by the people in power to create an expanded (and expansive) American middle class which would administer the programs and the economy of an evolving American society. Many of the people who supported this plan believed that they were creating a better world, or at least a better America. They envisioned an America which was characterized by an unprecedented (in the West) social mobility, an America in which everyone had access to society's ability to provide health services, education, housing and decent jobs. The grand plan was to be the free market economy's answer to the criticisms of the socialist world.

By U.S. standards, the vision of these times was very progressive. It involved, in effect, a limited redistribution of wealth. This redistribution was to be created through government policies which created programs which made education, housing, health programs and a sheaf of other benefits available for the first time to working class Americans. It was not a redistribution of property or of the means of production but rather the planned expansion of the middle class which took place during those years. The idea was that a social program which expanded the American middle class would create a futuristic and enlightened society in which poverty was a thing of the past. The new class would also porvide a large body of consumers of middle and high technology products which would create demands for the products of American industry and whould thus benefit the market economy. The social programs would also provide a means to buffer the growng unrest among the poor, especially the urban poor, by answering such events as the riots in Watts and Detroit with money to employ the discontented.

It was a plan that worked remarkably well at first. Millions of federal dollars were pumped into every community in America to provide health care, housing, job training and other services. The Social security system was expanded, as were such necessities as aid to dependent children and other welfare benefits. Colleges were a major recipient of the programs, and college enrollments expanded under both the influence of the "baby boom" that followed World War II and as the result of federal dollars which went to build and staff colleges and to help pay tuition and other education costs. Rich and poor benefited from these programs.

Where there was discontent, federal dollars were appropriated and the discontent went away. Not always, and never completely, but generally, the discontent was buried under a blizzard of federal dollars. The benefits were never great enough to blunt the reality of poverty, but they were enough to provide a bandaid to society's most festering sores.

The Indian communities were a special target of this "grand plan." Education programs were expanded and made available to Indian people as never before. Tens of thousands of Indians went to college. The idea was that they would form the backbone of the managerial class that was to administer the other programs of such strategies as the War on Poverty. College educated Indians would become the administrators of Indian housing and education programs, and would administer make-work programs on Indian reservations.

It was discovered that many people on Indian reservations lived at a level described as "extreme" poverty. That the poverty existed as a result of previous federal policies was ignored and the rhetoric promoted the historicaly indefensible idea that the poverty was the result of the "backwardness" and cultural behavior of the Indians. The "answer" to the problem of Indian poverty was widely promoted to be the alteration of the behavior patterns of the Indians. The victims of oppression were found to be to blame for their material conditions and only their integration into middle-class American values offered any hope for their redemption.

The integration of the Indian into middle-class America could be accomplished, fortunately, in ways which benefited private industry. The federal government would provide incentives to private industry in the form of moneys which would entice private enterprize to the reservation. There would be job incentive programs and job training programs which would train Indian people in the skills which would make them productive wage earners. Money would be made available to the tribes to administer these programs and as a buffer against grass-roots resistance.

All of these programs were designed to change the face of the Indian communities. It was urged upon Indian people that the reason that they were not employed was that they were not socialized to good work habits, did not have strong consumer values, lacked motivation and did not have access to jobs. In many cases these character deficiencies were ascribed to the Indian culture which, it was imagined by anthropologists and politicians alike, encouraged indolence and promoted a moral aversion to the work ethic. The federal programs would remedy these ills by providing job training and providing access to housing to tens of thousands of Indians. Once these people experienced the workaday world, and once they experienced the heavy rush of the consumer with money in his pocket in a market economy, Indians would achieve integration, thus becoming part of the work force and, incidentally, providing a market for American consumer goods. When the potential Indian worker was placed in a new home, the kind of home that requires a person with a substantial income to pay the electric bills, the heat bills, and in many cases the rent or the mortgage, the motivation to become a workman would be complete, as would assimlation of the Indian into American society.

It was a neat plan, but it was only partly successful part of the time. It was successful in socializing many Indian

people to the values of a consumer society, and it did create a dependency on the market economy. It was not successful, however, in creating a way of generating any kind of real economic growth within the reservation communities. The reason for this was that the programs were not designed to develop economic growth, they were designed to change the Indians. The economic growth plans, in most cases, were designed to benefit non-Indians. The single most important factor concerning the development of these programs was that they were to be financed by an expanding and prosperous American economy and were dependent on the unprecedented surpluses which that economy experienced during the 1960s and into the 1970s.

One fly in the ointment was the Vietnam War. The U.S. economy suffered greatly during those years when billions of dollars were spent in an overseas effort which exported huge amounts of American materials and labor which might have been put to domestic use. The war was also responsible for expanding the U.S. national debt. The government was successful for a time at exporting much of the inevitable inflation that followed, but eventually the economic dam broke, the inflation came to North America, and the American economy began to contract. There were other problems. Raw materials were becoming more expensive, other industrialized countries were competing in a world market which had been dominated by American interests, energy costs rose.

The federal programs, which seemed logical in theory, were not working as well as had been hoped. It was true that the poverty programs were having some impact in the areas of housing, job training, and consumer spending patterns of the poor. But the original plan, that the federal dollars would ultimately benefit industry by providing both consumers and workers for industry, was not working well under the conditions of a contracting economy. People were unemployed, it would seem, not because they had not adopted the work ethic, but because there were not enough jobs to go around.

The social programs, meanwhile, were beginning to flounder. The U.S. government has long had federal welfare programs which were designed to benefit the priviledged. Wealthy tobacco and peanut growers receive hefty subsidies for their crops, western ranchers get cheap leases of government lands and free water which is in fact provided by tax dollars, huge corporations get fat defense contracts, and on and on. Programs which were supposed to benefit the poor in fact also benefited the contractors who built the low-income housing and those who sold them the plumbing and so forth. In short, a lot of people benefited from these programs besides the intended beneficiaries, the poor.

The Indian governments were not innocent of the process which contributed to the problems of these social programs. The federal government moved to establish a program whereby there was to be expanded housing and under which many public buildings were built in the Indian country. It was a standing joke on Indian resrvations that whenever Indian people wanted anything, the first thing they did was to fill out a grant application for it. The federal government made the tribe responsible for finding the contractors and purchasing the materials for construction. Some Indian politicians set themselves up as contractors and as building suppliers and then caused their own companies to be awarded contracts for these building projects. A few became fairly prosperous doing this.

The federal government approached Indian governments with a plan whereby Indian governments would administer greatly expanded social programs which would provide jobs for administrators while offering Indian people adequate housing, health care and other social services. The Indian governments were suddenly in a position to administer previusly unheard of amounts of money and to hire large numbers of people in all kind of jobs ranging from tutors to housing administrators to administrators of make-work projects. Within a very short time the tribes (specifically the tribal governments and their employees) became dependent on the moneys from these programs as they were never dependent before.

Private sector development on the reservation for the most part failed because it was artificially induced. Electrical parts companies and moccasin factories and many others were enticed to set up shop on the reservation by tax breaks and by a federally funded work incentive program which essentially provided the entrepreneur with free (or at least greatly subsidized) non-union labor. There were many inducements, including "industrial parks" paid for by federal dollars and low interest development loans. It was a welfare program for the rich. The companies came to the reservation, took the free federal dollars, took advantage of the low-interest loans and the tax breaks, made their profits and left. Whatever benefits accrued in the form of trained factory workers were negated with the departures of these companies.

During this period, Indian politicians have been elected on the basis of their ability to obtain these federal grants. People in tribal government were hired and fired on the basis of their political affiliation within the tribal political "parties" and the parties came to power on the basis of their performance in obtaining federal grants. The level of dependence of some of these tribes became almost absolute. Most of the time the Indian people did not design or determine in any the focus or the desireability of these programs. The Indian governments became merely administrators not only of federal programs but, through them, of federal will. They were, in fact, "puppet governments." There were exceptions to this generalization, but they are too few to mention.

Despite this history of acquiescence to federal programming, an despite some actions that could only be described as rip-offs by Indian politicians, neither the Indian governments nor the Indian politicians are the real villians in this story. It could be argued, and many Indian politicians would argue, that they had no choice but to do what they did. Indian people are the poorest sector of U.S. population. There is a real need in these communities for housing, sanitation, clean water, food, some kind of income, training, education, and all the things the federal government seemed to be offering. Indian politicians were offered money and a veneer of political power to follow the federal guidelines. Many would argue that if they hadn't accepted the programs they would have been forced out of office in

ECONOMY continued page 15

"TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING"

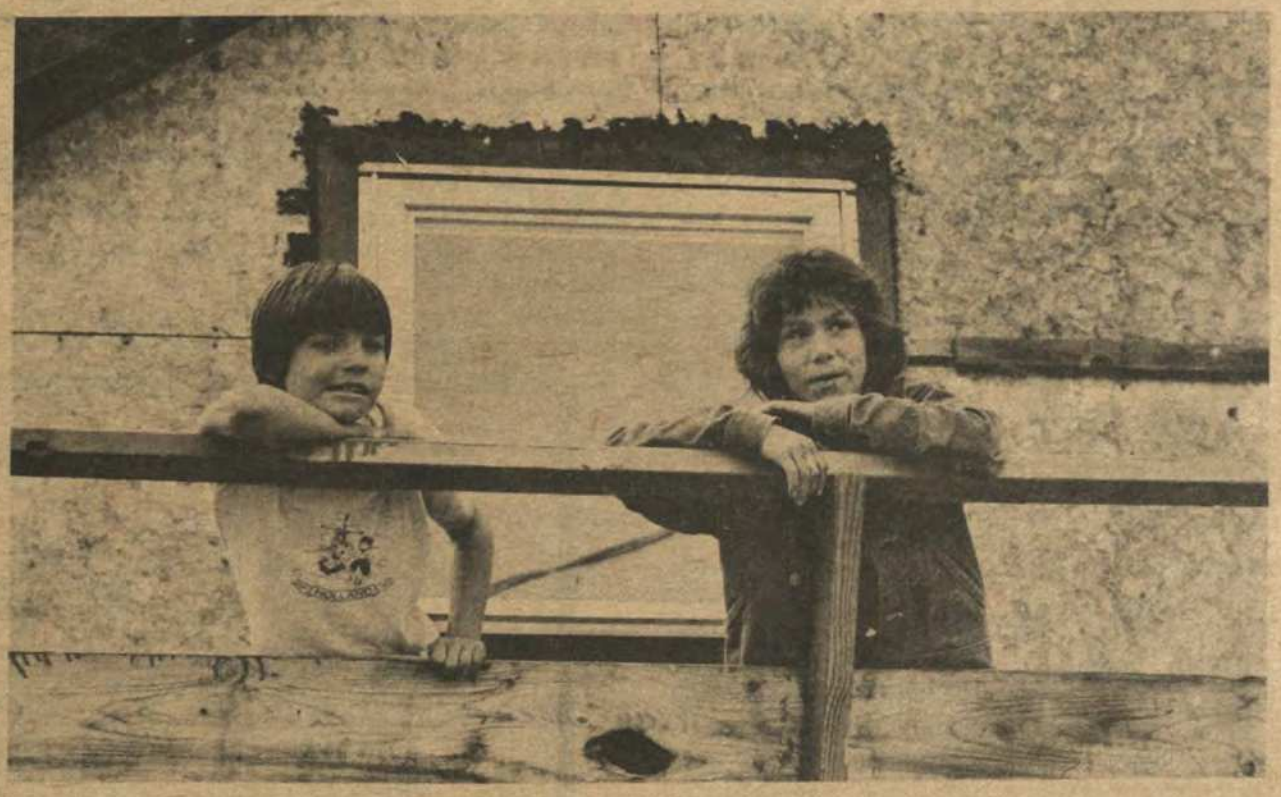
"This meeting was called in order to discuss the meat. It has been pointed out that there is no more meat. A motion has been made to fight over the bones."

-THE NATIVE NEVADAN

We Must Educate Our Children: A Message

SAKOKWENONKWAS Talks About the AKWESASNE FREEDOM SCHOOL

(Sako is a Bear Clan Chief of the Mohawk Nation. His children are fluent in three languages and have never attended United States schools. He says they never will because that schooling leads only to destruction.)
(NATIVE CHILD will not be presented in this issue. We felt it is very important to present the following message.)



It is important that the people, friends, of the Freedom School, understand the situation where the people are at right now. We have come through a great "storm" you might call it. We came through a great time in history these last couple of years. In just that fact, there should be a great admiration for that.

The Mohawk people here are like all Indian people across the country – there is a movement going on across the world. But in particular, this school is somewhat unlike other Freedom Schools. It is unlike alternative schools and I believe it is different, because THIS SCHOOL IS TRYING TO RESTORE A NATION OF PEOPLE TO THE FORMER WAY THAT THEY WERE BEFORE THE INTRUSION, before the colonialization, and before any of these negative things.

At the same time it is a school that is also very realistic. It has to be aware of the world that surrounds the Mohawk people in this day and age. The preamble of the school is "Two Worlds for One People" and that couldn't be more true. So we have a very difficult task ahead of us.

There's no blueprint, no formula to follow. There's no guidelines to say: this is how you will succeed and just for that fact, the staff who are the teachers here at the Freedom School, the parents who send their children here, and the students themselves, and all the people who support and encourage this Freedom School at Akwesasne have to be commended, because there is no blueprint that says this is what you should do to have a success. This is what you do that will benefit your people – it's a sure thing. There is no shortcut – there is nothing that is definite.

The only thing that is definite is that things cannot go on the way they were going. Our children cannot be turned out of educational institutions the way they were and have been. They cannot remain in that situation for their sake and for their health and sanity.

Now, let me tell you of the Iroquois, which the Mohawks are part of. There is a constitution which predates the American Constitution by hundreds of years. It is a constitution which was the source of an entire society of people. The purpose of this constitution and the goals of this Iroquois society was to bring peace to the world – how to live together in peace. Those stories still are here, the people have struggled over the years not to lose this, but we, at this time, are very close to losing it.

It is questionable yet if what we can remember in theory can become a reality of life, as our great-great grandfathers had lived. How to live this peaceful life that they lived and they practiced it. Now it is not that way because of the government of the United States, both through intentional purpose and also through the many people of the United States involved with education of our Indian people, our Indian children. Many of them have been well-intentioned, but have destroyed the people, even though they were well-intentioned.

But both aspects of that, the intent to destroy and the accidental destruction, have left our people in a way where we don't know what is truthful, who is really sincere? A great doubt is in the minds of our people, in our children when you talk about government officials. Our young people are coming to the stage where our elders, parents, they don't know whether they should believe them either. Their education system has produced this doubt, this destruction.

Part of the main teaching that we had before was that our leaders who are supposed to be appointed to the old constitution that united the Iroquois (and which inspired the United States – Benjamin Franklin and those people) part of this description of the constitution talks about the chiefs who are to be the prime example, the prime rafter of the Nation.

The people of the Nation, they had the chiefs as the examples of how to pattern their life. They were chosen by the people through their respective clans and it says that a chief or leader, a traditional leader, will have skin seven hands thick. So that he will not anger, and that sharp words and criticism will not penetrate into his heart and cause him to go into a fit, or a rampage, or become very angry.

It says in our constitution that these leaders must be responsive to the needs of their people, be it day or night, twenty-four hours of the day. They must be at the forefront if there is any danger coming to their people. They must be ready to talk, to protect their people. They will carry a good mind, they will not be selfish, they will give of their time even if they are married. And when they marry, the woman they marry becomes the second wife and the people of the Nation is the first wife. Even the children that they have through that marriage become the second children, children of the Nation become his first.

That he will be responsive to the people. No child, no person of the Nation will ever be reluctant or feel awkward to approach that leader with his problems, with his happiness – never to be reluctant. These leaders are part of the people – the people are not afraid of him. And they live right among the people, there is no separation. There's no fancy about it, they are just people. Those are the characteristics, those things are part of what has to be taught to the children of our Nation.

Now, all our children have been taken, our grandfathers have been taken to Carlysle Indian School in Pennsylvania. They have been taken to Spanish Indian School in Ontario. They have been taken to Thomas Indian School in the southern part of New York State, they have been taken all over. (This took place during the early 1900's.)

The United States and Canada have spent millions and millions of dollars to educate them, to bring us to this time of destruction.

Thirty and forty years ago before colonial education affected our people, people used to have "work bees" to help people build their houses. They used to all get together and plow fields with teams of horses. They then go to the next field when they finish and then they all go to the

"We see our future written in the faces of our children"

SPRING PLANTING AT AKWESASNE FREEDOM SCHOOL

next field and so on. They used to go to the barns to braid the corn, they harvested the corn together. When they finish that farm, they go to the next farm and they do that again. You don't see that anymore. They used to cut wood for each other. Nobody would go without, nobody went hungry though they were poor in other respects - far as material things go.

Today when a carpenter builds a house he tries to build it the cheapest, quickest way. He doesn't build a house that would last a 100 years, a good house. Part of what's missing in todays' world is a good honest days work, quality work and ambition.

Today there is a lot of dope, marijuana around and according to our ways that's not supposed to be, but it is. Alcohol is predominant. Young men have the wrong notion of what manhood is. Young women have the wrong notion of what womanhood is. Everything is confused. So these schools that have taken our children, up to two years ago, have produced these destructive results. And it's not only in the Mohawk country, but the same results even in the non-Indian communities.

So there is something wrong with their education. It is providing a feeling of insecurity, of false securities. It is providing a whole mess of people - that are supposed to be the future, the caretakers to make sure that our values, principles, our dignity shall survive to carry our people into the next generation - with a total lack of identity.

There is an identity going on, but it is all false. All superficial, macho people. We see young guys trying to be like "superman" type of person instead of being a regular person. They try to pretend they are like big executive this or that. So none of it is really true. None of it is with their feet on the ground. So now we are in a rough situation.

The main thing, I think is the respect for the way it really was. Now, that is why we start this Freedom School. To relearn, that the children may pattern themselves, their lives the way the chiefs used to be, because we need chiefs again that are like that. We need them now because we are going into the future which is very dangerous not for only the Mohawks, but for the entire world, with pollution and all these things.

Now we are talking about solar energies and different alternative technologies which will not be destructive. We want to explore them, but first the purpose of this school is to find where we feel comfortable, strong, and united with the people so we can deal with the problems that are coming the next hour, the next day and next week. We must first find out all those things that the regular public schools of the United States and Canada had produced in our people to be so negative so afraid, so lacking confidence.

We must first produce that good togetherness and then we can talk about the real alternative technologies and explore that as full, complete young people, young girls and boys, who are confident, not afraid. Then we need to get the people who know that, are intelligent about that - and that takes money. Then we need to build those alternative technologies - that takes money. Then we need to restructure our society. Make once again "wood bees" to cut wood for the old people who have no wood.

Every young person must learn to the best of their ability their particular talent or skill, not just to benefit themselves, but to benefit the survival of our entire community, our Nation. The young people must learn necessary skills also in the white mans world, like reading, math, etc. and they must learn these skills with dignity. That is what we do at our Freedom School.

When I was a child, they told us that every old people is your grandfather, your grandmother, and we really believed it - and we called them that. Today, you don't hardly see any young people calling the old people, grandfather or grandmother. Even their own immediate cousins, and second cousins, you might as well say they are people visiting from far away, yet we are in one community. These are the things - how can we teach our young again to look at all old people as our ancestors taught us - that they are your relatives, that they are your grandfathers and grandmothers. How are we going to teach them that their fifth and sixth cousins are part of their family, are their relatives.

Just the basic things of how to unite and really share with one another. That will be our first step. So this school is actually a first seed - the seeds to produce the leaders of tomorrow in its truest sense. Because we are very much in the point of danger, whether we are going to survive. And all it takes is to carry a good mind everyday. All it takes is to be concerned and to do things together. Whether we succeed or fail doesn't make a difference, but those are the goals. It's just to do things together. That togetherness is the main thing. Regardless of whether it is a victory or a loss. WE MUST HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY. When we see our children become speakers, or have the ability and desire to build a good house - then we will see positive results of our school.

About the federal programs, people have told us to seek money from the federal programs - but our parents of the students, in an admirable way - they said "no". We will try our own way through private foundations and through friends. So day by day, things are going on. The teachers hardly receive any pay. Our teachers, 21 of them, are Mohawks, Europeans, non-Indians and volunteers. Some are heads of large families, and mothers, and still they are dedicated. They didn't quit, they didn't leave us. They are still sticking with us and this is the second year now. So that feeling is strong.

It is said by different people in the world that the Iroquois confederacy was the first deocratic government in the world. These children that attend the Freedom School are the foundation of that confederacy of the United Nations. If these children can gain a positive attitude about themselves and about each other the world again will hear their great confederacy for it will become healthy and strong and it will radiate like the sun again. And peace can become a reality.

So to the people who are going to read this, we still don't want federal or state money, but we do need money from friends and private groups with no strings attached that would tie us up. So that is why I am encouraging the people, if they are able, to help the school.

We do fund-raising in our community. We have pot luck dinners, bingos, raffles. Our students, parents, teachers and community people ran a 72 mile "Marathon for Survival" in the rain and snow to raise money for our school. We are working hard, together, it is a beginning.

AKWESASNE FREEDOM SCHOOL
MOHAWK NATION
PO BOX 290
VIA ROOSEVELTOWN, NY 13683

Mohawk Nation: "a resolution of issues . . ."

INTERVIEW WITH JULIUS COOK

AN: Last Spring, a number of Akwesasne people were facing indictments which arose out of incidents from two years before. There was a lot of tension and many incidents in the conflict between the Traditional Mohawks and New York State Police and a so-called vigilante group. AKWESASNE NOTES reported the conflict between the St. Regis Tribal Council and the Traditional Chief's Council. You ran for office in the Tribal Council and won. Could you describe the events that led you to enter the election.

Julius Cook: I was approached by people in the Tribal Council late last winter or early spring. These were non-traditional people who came to me and asked me if I would consider taking part in that government. I turned them down flat because I had a feeling inside of me that that government was not right for our people. I didn't change my mind about running until April. I was seeing things happen there that, if they continued in that way, it wouldn't be long before our people would be in dire straights. After the warrants were lifted, I was able to attend the Tribal meetings.

At one of the meetings, a proposed resolution was read to the people, and as soon as it was read Reginald White, who was then Head Chief, asked for a vote without any discussion. However, he didn't get that. Several of the people who were attending that meeting, myself included, wanted some questions anwered about this proposed housing authority resolution. None of our questions were answered satisfactorily about the powers it might have and what it might lead to. In spite of the fact that none of the questions were answered, White put the motion to a vote and it was passed.

I have to state that six days before this Tribal meeting, a memorandum was sent out by the Tribal Council to the different departments of the Tribal government. We got a hold of this memorandum and when you read it, what it meant was that all of the people who work for the Tribal Council had to be at that meeting. It didn't say so in so many words, but when you had finished reading the letter it told you that you were to get your body up to the Tribal Council and take part in this voting or we would lose our programs and lose our jobs. It was a veiled threat, the way I look at it.

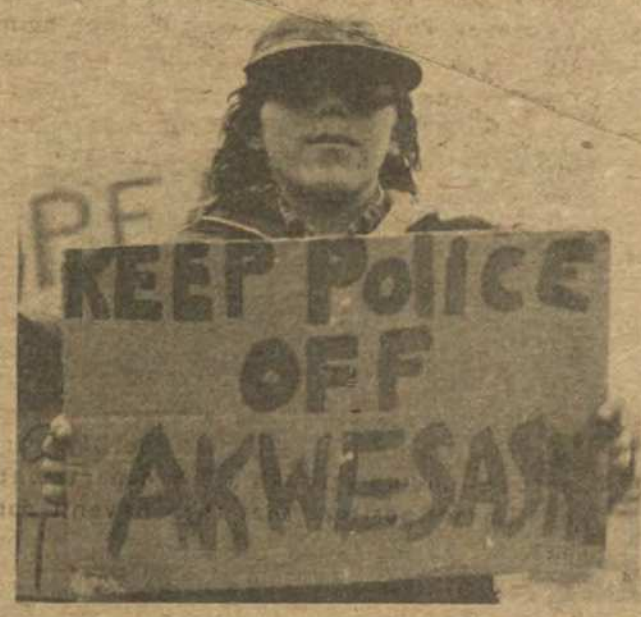
AN: The assertion on the part of then-chief White was that any failure to abide by their wishes would result in the loss of revenue?

JC: That's right.

AN: Was that also an issue that he brought before the people at the time of the election in June?

JC: That's true.

AN: But there were other issues. Last



Winter, the Tribal Council adopted a tribal code under a set of federal regulations called 25 CFR. It was done without public notification and became an issue as the election drew near.

JC: At a February 7 [1981] meeting, I believe that the Tribal Council got the feeling that they had control of the meeting. They then brought up a resolution to adopt a criminal and judicial code for Akwesasne. The resolution stated the need for a criminal and civil code and court system. In the middle of the resolution, it gave the Tribal Council authority to put together and ENACT such a code. After the resolution was read, Reginald White asked for a vote. Several people, including myself, got up and asked some questions. I asked the Tribal Council if they could explain to me what this civil and criminal and judicial code was. I wanted to know what I was voting on. I asked them to explain it to me, what is it, what does it mean for our people? I received no answer.

A young lady got up and asked the Head Chief if they had used the word "enact" in that resolution. The question was dismissed because the person reading the resolution couldn't find the word "enact" even though it was plainly there and it is still there today in that resolution. Several other people asked questions. Not one question was answered. When they pushed it to a vote, 77 voted for it, 71 against.

AN: It has been charged that at Akwesasne, a very small number of people - 77 in this case - who had become very vocal and active, came to dominate the Tribal Council.

JC: That's right. After the meeting, I talked to an individual who was present and who voted in favor of the resolution. I said, "can you tell me what you voted for at that meeting? Can you tell me what the CFR is, because I didn't know." He hung his head in shame. He couldn't answer. I said, "You can't tell me, can you? You don't know what it's all about, do you? Why did you vote yes? Seventy-six other people raised their hand and voted yes, and not one of you knew what you were voting for, isn't that right?" I said, "You didn't know, did you?" He said, "no." I said, "is it right that 77 people vote for something they don't know about?" And that's the way it was. It occured to me then that something had to be done. It was about that time that I decided I might run for office. Right after this February 7 meeting, a petition was circulated among the people at Akwesasne. I helped to circulate it. The petition demanded that the Akwesasne Police be disbanded and stated that the people had not authorized the tribal code. Prior to that we had discovered that in April of 1980 they had passed a tribal resolution adopting a conservation code and they had sent in a proposal for a $75,000 grant for conservation purposes. It was news to me that we had two game wardens on the reservation and a set of conservation laws to live under.

While I was taking the petition around, I asked at each household, "Did you know that we have a conservation program here on the reservation, that we have game wardens, and that we have a program funded by the federal government for $75,000?" The answer at every household that I went to was, "No, I know nothing about it." Well, that was something to think about.

The petition was signed by about 325 enrolled members and we had about 330 non-enrolled resident Indians - a total of over 650 signatures. In late April or early May, my daughter and I were sent to Washington, D.C. to do some research. Our last visit was with the BIA. Our reason for going to the BIA was to present the petition to the office of Kenneth Payton, Acting Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. At that meeting was also present Harry Rainbolt, Jim Thompson, John Myers and Frances Ayers. My daughter Beverly started the presentation by explaining the situation with the Akwesasne Police. I told them that I had a petition from the people which indicated that the people of Akwesasne did not authorize the creation of the Akwesasne Police or the code.

John Myers pointed his finger at me and said, "I fail to see what this has to do with us here in Washington. That doesn't concern us. That's an internal matter and you should take that to the three chiefs up there on the reservtion. It doesn't concern us down here."

It didn't take me long to realize that I wasn't satisfied with what he said and I said to him, "Mr. Myers, you just said that this was an internal matter, did you not? " He said, "Yeah." I said, "Then how come, a few months ago, when the elected chiefs up there did bad things against our people, and the people rose up and had a recall vote to impeach them, and they were unanimously, overwhelmingly voted out of office, why was it not an internal matter then? You say it is an internal matter now! Who was it that came up to our lands, our territory, from this office, and told us that that recall vote from the people was no good? Who was it, Mr. Myers? He came from this office, did he not?"

"Yes he did. He came from this office and he said it wasn't legal. But now you tell

us it's an internal matter! I'm not satisfied with that." And then Frances Ayers said, "What's all the fuss about? You have the code!" Well, we sat there just flabbergasted. We said, "What? We have what?" And she said, "You have the code, 25 CFR." Almost simultaneously we said, "When?" She said, "February 4, in Syracuse. There was present at the signing Arthur Gajarsa and the three chiefs, Jim Thompson and myself."

"How can that be?", I said to myself, because that same resolution that was signed in February was turned down overwhelmingly in January. The Trustees went to Syracuse knowing that the wishes of our people were that we not have this code. They went to Syracuse on February 4, in spite of our people, and secretly adopted this code. We were in shock.

AN: And the date of the meeting on which the vote was taken and the code adopted was February 7?

JC: Yes. The vote was three days after the Tribal council had secretly adopted it.

AN: Would you say that the fact that attorney Gajarsa was present at the meeting made him a political issue at Akwesasne?

JC: Definitely.

AN: It is believed by many at Akwesasne that the reason the Tribal Council was anxious to adopt 25 CFR was so that the Akwesasne Police would have some kind of code of law to adopt.

JC: That's true. We later learned that a panel of judges had already been selected to enforce this code.

AN: Four issues appear to have emerged last Spring. First, 25 CFR was secretly passed and then later pushed through a Tribal Council meting, a court system was secretly being set up, and this was done to justify the existence of the Akwesasne Police. And all this was done with at the very least the knowledge of Arthur Gajarsa. Three things out of that list became concrete issues: the 25 CFR, the Akwesasne Police, and Gajarsa.

JC: That's right.

AN: In June there was an election. It produced by far the largest turnout in the history of Akwesasne, 738 people voted. Reginald White, the leader of the Tribal Council in all these dealings, was your principal opposition and in a three candidate election, you were elected by a clear and substantial majority of the votes. Following that, we saw a public referendum which took place in August at which time the people voted on these three issues. The people voted no to all three issues.

One result of all this is that since your election, major issues have come to be decided by referendum vote. This is probably the most democratic way such issues are decided on Indian reservations right now. Do you have any feelings about that process?

JC: I like the process of the referendum vote because it gives all of the people a chance to participate in expressing their views about what they want. I would think it is much better than the way things were done at the monthly meetings.

AN: After you came to office, you were tipped off to the possibility that the Akwesasne Police Force was in fact being paid out of a recently expanded Conservation Law Enforcement Program grant. Isn't it true that according to federal policy, so-called Public Law 280 states and New York State, which is under a similar law called P.L. 232,233, are not eligible for BIA police funding because if the BIA were to fund Indian Police in New York State, it would follow that they would need to fund Indian police in all the P.L. 280 states?

JC: As I understand it, what you say is correct. I'm not so sure that the BIA can't approve funding through other departments, and I'm not positive that they haven't done that.

AN: The Conservation Law Enforcement grant that you are talking about was approved by Harry Rainbolt of the BIA. This grant was a grant of money which was intended to support and did in fact support an Indian police force, was it not?

JC: Yes it was.

AN: Was there ever really a Conservation Law Enforcement program at Akwesasne?

JC: As a Conservation Law Enforcement Program I hve to answer no, because thhere were no arrests made and there was no conservation activity. The game wardens did not do actual conservation enforcement work.

AN: What were the people who were receiving money as game wardens doing?

JC: Those two people were maintaining the operation of the water pumping station.

AN: And this had gone on for more than a year before the grant proposal to expand the Conservation Law Enforcement Program to include salaries for the Akwesasne Police was submitted?

JC: Yes. It had been going on since the beginning of the program.

AN: On the eve of the referendum, did you not circulate an open letter to the people to explain that the Conservation Program was a fraud, and that the way the money for that program was being spent was, at best, highly irregular?

JC: Yes.

AN: Would you say that the Conservation Program grant was merely a ruse to get money to support the Akwesasne Police Department?

JC: It certainly appeared that way by the way the program was being run.

AN: Has anything been done to look into Harry Rainbold's role in approving the expansion of a Conservation Law Enforcement Program which apparently never delivered the proposed services?

JC: An investigation has been requested but to this date we have received no notification that one is taking place.

AN: How did the referendum turn out.

JC: It turned out in the favor of the people because every issue on that referendum was defeated.

AN: There were three issues on the referendum. The Akwesasne Police, 25CFR, and whether to keep Arthur Gajarsa as the Tribal attorney. Would you say that the people interpreted the outcome to be that they fired the police, that they rejected 25 CFR, and that they fired Arthur Gajarsa?

JC: Absolutely.

CORN HUSK DOLLS

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

HAND-MADE CORN HUSK DOLLS
PERCHED ON A MUSHROOM SHELF

"These dolls are authentically hand-made from white corn husks and are dressed in traditional attire. Each doll depicts in miniature the various phases of Iroquoian culture and customs.

These are collectors' items as no two dolls are ever made exactly alike, each is a one of a kind item.

To see more of our corn husk dolls send for our Products Catalogue.

8 inch	$45.75	11 "	102.00
9 "	70.75	12 "	120.75
10 "	89.50		

THE 6TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRADITIONAL ELDERS CIRCLE

August 9-14, 1981
Onondaga Nation

COMMUNIQUE #3

Since communique #1 dealing Indian medicine men and there activities here and in foreign lands, we have received complaints of abuses by individuals and organizations, such as:

a) Medicine bags being sold to non-Indians and Indians.

b) Sweat Lodges being run by Indians for non-Indians, particularly in Europe, but not exclusively.

c) Exorbitant prices, as much as $250.00 per individual, per sweat.

d) Instructions on the use of the sacred pipe given to non-Indians for a price.

e) Sundances being run in West Germany by a Lakota.

f) Seminars on Indian medicine being run by Indians and non-Indians for high rates.

g) Exploitation and abuses of sacred medicnes of great power with damaging results mentally and physically to those participating.

h) Commercialization of Indian ceremonies through books, films, seminars, instructions and sales of sacred symbols.

i) Exploitation of Indian and non-Indian people seeking spiritual security, through Indian ceremonies.

j) Non-Indian individuals professing to be Indian through dress and insinuation.

k) Foundations established in the name of Traditional Elders and tribes without accounting to Elders.

l) The sacred drum is being abused by singing groups who drink and use drugs while using the drum; by singing sacred songs in public, and using different Nation's songs with the wrong drum, and performing at public occassions for large fees.

The drum is sacred and must be treated with respect.

This list of abuses and exploitations of the sacred ceremonies, symbols of the Native people of this Turtle Island, has been documented and further investigation is currently being carried on to verify these accusations.

The Elders Circle is gravely concerned since the welfare of all people and their future is threatened by these abuses for personal gain. We ask further response from people who feel they have been victimized by these activities.

The power of Native Medicine is through the spiritual purity of the ceremony conducted by the Native person who has been chosen by the medicine to do this.

One cannot buy this at any price and anyone who offers this especially to non-Indians for fees defrauds not only the victim but also themselves.

Contact will be made with those concerned and the results will be made known to the people.

Daw Nay Toh,
Elders circle
Onondaga Nation
via: Nedrow, New York 13120

BOOK REVIEW

THE MEDICINE WHEEL

(by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, reprinted with permission of author originally published Ontario Indian, June 1981, Vol.4 No.6)

Last summer while browsing through the Longhouse Bookstore, a bookstore with a fine range of Indian literature, my eye caught the bright yellow cover of The Medicine Wheel. I picked it up, read the front and back cover, and reshelved it thinking "you can't tell a book by its cover." This year, however, I consented to to review it and found that every page confirmed and reinforced my initial reaction.

The first page, "Comments on The Medicine Wheel," suggests that this is not a pre-packaged deal, not just "another system of personality classification," but "a new vision for our times," and "the medicine ways" that Sun Bear and Wabun offer, will help "to restore healthy relations among people and the Earth."

The authors acknowledge and thank the great Spirit for allowing them to be "instruments of His will." Further, "The Author's Note" begins: "The foundation of the religion of the Native people...is personal vision, personal communication between the individual and the Creator Spirit." We read on and find that this book is the result of Sun Bear's personal vision. Are Sun Bear and Wabun setting-up another religious cult? (On the last page we find that this Chippewa man has founded The Bear Tribe in Spokane, Washington.) Is The Medicine Wheel their bible, a vehicle of religious propaganda?

To the best of the authors' knowledge the information in The Medicine Wheel does not "conform to any way of gaining self-knowledge used by any particular tribe in the United States." They also purport not to have read or studied astrology, but talked with others who have.

To all this preliminary proselytization is added exerpts from the "my-heart-soars-like-a-hawk" school of trite Indian phrases: "Our fellow two-leggeds," "Th-at was the vision I saw," and "I have spoken."

The heart of the book consists of vague, inadequate, sometimes ridiculous, statements that have been scrambled to describe any one:

> "Like their stone, Raven people come in a wide variety of forms, depending upon their mood or balance at any given time."
> "Like their totem, some Raven people pair for life, while others don't."

We would all be pretty stupid not to know that all people come in a wide variety of forms and some pair for life and others do not!

Had the authors studied astrology, their book would have been strengthened by the many hundred years of research by competent and professional astrologers. It would have given the book astrological credibility, if only in the eyes of those who accept astrology as a legitimate area of study.

I find this book another attempt to cash in on the Indian spiritualism and astrology market:

> "A long time ago the Great Spirit looked upon the earth he had created according to his vision, and he became sad. The minerals, the plants, the animals and the humans had all forgotten the law of unity by which they were to live."
> "We attribute any similarities between the Medicine Wheel and astrology..all truths come from the same Source."

Like any pre-packaged instant soup or pudding mix (which serve more the food processors that the consumer), The Medicine Wheel is complete with its share of additives and preservatives to pep up the stale taste of the patriarchal supreme-male-deity. This process has since contact, sacrificed the inherent colour and flavour of Native philosophies by attempting to improve desirable properties while surpressing undesireable properties.

Whether it is the bright yellow packaging that catches your eye, or the allusions to astrology, do not be blinded by the fact that this book is poorly written;

> "When the earth was young, there were no butterflies to fly by... with their wings carrying some of the colours of the rainbow."

It strains too hard for effect and cleverness;

> "In order to grow you must reach out and give of yourself to the universe. You give and you grow in experiencing the universe. No teacher can teach a selfish person. If you have a mind lock that locks you into one position, you will not grow beyond that."
> "You are unique so you will share some characteristics of all these, but you won't share all of them."

It is heavily laced with pure stereotyping (a noble preservative, no doubt);

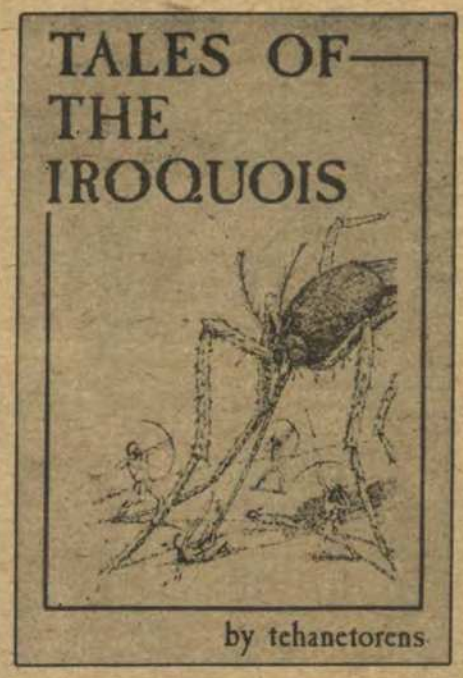
> "When you see a red hawk in the sky, it makes your heart soar..."

I am sure that if you journey through The Medicine Wheel, you will find it a not-so-unique vision, another merry-go-round, another trip into the "magical world" where the snap, crackle and pop of Indian-spiritualism is alive and well and living in Spokane, Washington. Or is it - Jonestown, Guyana?

OUR OWN PUBLICATIONS

basic call to consciousness

BASIC CALL TO CONSCIOUSNESS – A new edition, a new book. Five new chapters have been added to this small classic of the Native movement. They include: The Hau De No Sau Nee: A Nation Since Time Immemorial, by Segwalise; Thoughts of Peace: The Great Law, by Sotsisowah; Deskaheh: An Iroquois Patriot's Fight for International Recognition; Geneva 77': A Report on the Hemispheric Movement of Indigenous Peoples, by Ismaeillo; The Original – A Basic Call to Consciousness, The Hau De No Sau Nee Address to the Western World; and Our Strategy for Survival, by Sotsisowah. A new, full-color cover and several photographs from international events are also featured. $5.50



Tales of the Iroquois presents sixteen teaching legends written by a Mohawk author, Tehanetorens, illustrated by a Mohawk artist, Kahonhes.

In traditional cultures teaching legends were an integral aspect of the oral instruction and education of young people. These teaching legends provide us with another way to see the world. They teach us the value of the natural world, land and the proper way for human beings to live together.

Each teaching legend is packed with a thought-provoking insightful lesson for children as well as adults. $5.00

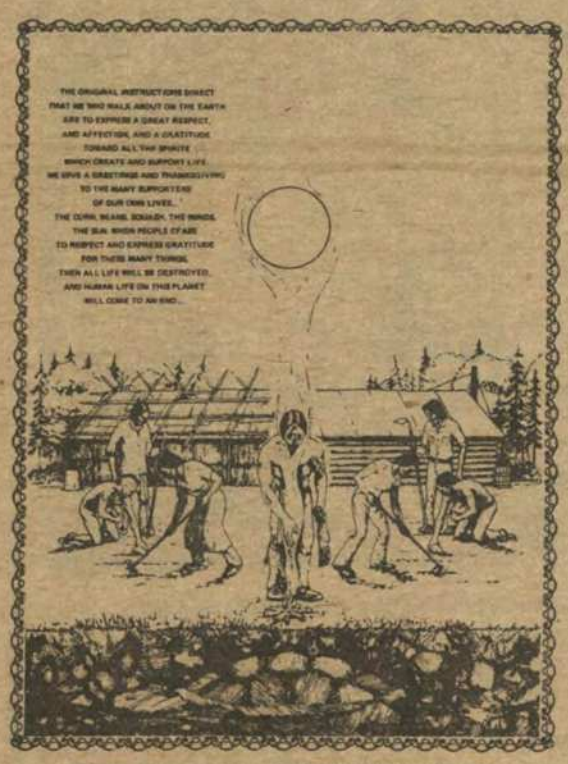
This is the story of the liberation of Wounded Knee in pictures and the words of the participants, which were recorded while the occupation was in progress. $6.95

"Pagans" exposes the true nature of journalistic racism in the years 1885–1910. The focus is on the Onondaga, Mohawk, and Seneca Nations of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. $6.95

NATIVE WOMAN POSTER
(1981 Calendar cover) $3.00

CIRCLE OF LIFE 25

POUNDMAKER 9



THE ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS 32

UNITY UNDER CREATION 31

AKWESASNE FREEDOM SCHOOL

Presents: Two Films

AKWESASNE: Another Point of View

A portrait of a Indian community faced with two choices – survival or assimilation. This 28 minute film explores the obstacles faced by traditional Mohawk people in their past 2 years of struggle to establish peace in their territory. A fast-paced film, replete wth clear and succint descriptions of a contemporary Indian community fighting to retain traditional rights.

16mm, color, 28 minutes, $450.00

AND

HAUDENOSAUNEE: Way of the Longhouse

A beautiful, comprehensive film, Haudenosaunee tells about the ways and attitudes of the people of the Longhouse -- The Haudenosaunee (or Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy).

The League of the Haudenosaunee, established some one thousand years ago, is one of the oldest, continuously functioning governments in the Western Hemisphere. It is based on a comprehensive and interrelated code of principles and concepts known as the Great Law of Peace. This film explores some of those concepts as it frames a portrait of the contemporary Haudenosaunee Peoples – their professions, schools, organizations – a synthesis of the old and the new -- the essence of survival.

16mm, color, $250.00

ORDER FROM:
RSP Media Enterprises
429 Greenbrier Dr.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 588-1911

TO SEE OUR COMPLETE LINE OF PRODUCTS SEND FOR:

1981-82 PRODUCTS CATALOGUE

This season we are featuring an exciting line of local, hand-made craft items. Including: Corn Husk Dolls, Market Baskets, Beadwork, and Ribbon Shirts. As well as our Books, Calendars, Posters, Cassette Tapes, Pack Baskets and Sweet Grass Baskets.

$1.00

PAINTED TIPI 30

POSTERS: $1.00 each or 3 for $2.00,

plus 25 cents shipping charge

ORDER FORM

PLEASE PREPAY ORDERS OF $25.00 OR LESS

SHIP THE ITEMS LISTED BELOW TO:

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

HOW MANY	ITEM	PRICE	TOTAL